Planet Ladder
3
Yuri Narushima
TOKYOPOP

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Planet Ladder

Volume 3

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PLANET LADDER MULTIDIMENSIONAL UNIVERSE BREAKDOWN.

THE FIRST WORLD: ANCIENT. NOW DESTROYED.

THE THIRD WORLD: EDEN. PRESENT-DAY EARTH WHERE KAGUYA ONCE LIVED. IT IS AN ISOLATED WORLD USED AS A PENAL COLONY.

THE FOURTH WORLD TELENE. ONCE A GREAT POWER, BUT, AFTER THE GREAT WAR, IS ON THE VERGE OF BEING CONQUERED BY GEO. WHERE KAGUYA AND FRIENDS ARE CURRENTLY. IT IS ENEMIES WITH ASURAITSU AND GEO, AND ALLIES WITH THE NINTH WORLD.

THE EIGHTH WORLD ASURAITSU. IDOU'S BIRTHPLACE. A RELIGIOUS STATE THAT HAS ENEMIES IN TELENE AND GEO. ASURAITSU ALSO INTERVENES IN THE AFFAIRS OF GEUS.

THE SEVENTH WORLD. GEO. VICTORS IN THE GREAT WAR, GEO IS A HIGHLY CIVILIZED MILITARY DICTATORSHIP UNDER THE EMPEROR, KURA.

THE NINTH WORLD: KAGUNAHAAN'S BIRTHPLACE. IT WAS DESTROYED IN THE GREAT WAR. AN ALLY OF TELENE AND CONQUERED BY GEO.

THE SIXTH WORLD: GEUS. UNDER THE RULE OF GEO.

THE SECOND WORLD: ASU. SEEU'S BIRTHPLACE. THE WORLD HAS DECAYED SO MUCH THAT NOT EVEN THE ORIGINAL SHAPE OF THE PLANET REMAINS. IN RUINS NOW. IT WAS ONCE ON FRIENDLY TERMS WITH THE NINTH WORLD.

THE EMPEROR KURA HAS LED GEO FOR 300 YEARS UNDER A DICTATORSHIP. THE MASTER OF THE NOX LIGHT.

IDOU
THE FORMER BISHOP OF ASURAITSU WHO NOW SERVES UNDER GEO. THE MASTER OF THE ZENITH CRYSTAL.

THE MAD PRINCE SEEU THE CREATOR OF THE ORGANIC GOLD. HE SEARCHES FOR KAGUYA AND THE MASTER OF THE LUNATO MERCURY.

THE FIFTH WORLD: MESNIE LALACOTT AND GAVIES EBIRA'S BIRTHPLACE. THIS WORLD MAINTAINS NEUTRALITY.

WHAT IS THE FINAL STAGE OF A MULTIDIMENSIONAL UNIVERSE? A MULTIDIMENSIONAL/PARALLEL UNIVERSE IS A UNIVERSE WITH LAYERS LOCATED IN MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS, AND EACH LAYER IS CALLED "A WORLD." THESE PARALLEL WORLDS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE ABLE TO EXIST SIDE BY SIDE. HOWEVER, DUE TO A TEAR IN THE FABRIC OF THE UNIVERSE, THE AXIS WHICH SUPPORTS THESE WORLDS SHAKES. THIS SHAKING WILL ULTIMATELY LEAD TO THE COLLISION, AND THUS DEMISE, OF ALL THE WORLDS WITHIN A MULTIDIMENSIONAL UNIVERSE.

WHAT IS THE SAVIOR STORY? A PROPHECY OF THE FIRST WORLD, ANCIENT. IN THE TIME OF THE END OF THE WORLDS, A YOUNG GIRL, "THE GIRL OF ANANAI," WILL APPEAR AND CHOOSE ONLY ONE WORLD TO SURVIVE.

SHIINA MOL BAMVIVIRIE (BAMBI)

A MYSTERIOUS AND BEAUTIFUL SILVER-HAIRED GIRL. SHE PROTECTED KAGUYA WHEN SHE WAS FIRST LOST, AND IS NOW KAGUYA'S TRAVELING COMPANION.

KAGAMI

THE MASTER OF THE ORGANIC GOLD, WHICH DOESN'T EXIST IN ANY WORLD. HIS RELATION TO KAGUYA, IF ANY, IS YET UNKNOWN.

GOLD

A MOVING DOLL THAT IS THE MIRROR IMAGE OF KAGAMI. GOLD IS THE CURRENT USER OF THE ORGANIC GOLD.

THE STORY UNTIL NOW...

AFTER STUMBLING INTO A FOREIGN WORLD, KAGUYA IS SAVED BY BAMBI. THROUGH THIS SILVER-HAIRED GIRL, KAGUYA LEARNS THAT SHE IS ON ANOTHER EARTH, THE FOURTH WORLD CALLED "TELENE," AND THAT THE UNIVERSE IS COMPOSED OF MANY LAYERS, EACH ONE EVOLVING DIFFERENTLY TO CREATE NINE SEPARATE EARTHS. EACH OF THE NINE EARTHS IS NOW IN ITS FINAL STAGE OF EXISTENCE, BUT IT WAS FORETOLD IN A SAVIOR STORY THAT, ONE DAY, THE "GIRL OF ANANAI" WOULD APPEAR TO CHOOSE ONE OF THE EARTHS TO REMAIN AND LIVE ON. COULD THIS GIRL BE KAGUYA? ALL OF A SUDDEN, THE PALACE SHIINA, WHICH HAD TAKEN KAGUYA INTO ITS PROTECTION, IS SURROUNDED BY ARMORED TROOPS SEEKING TO TEAR OPEN THE GATES. BAMBI MANAGES TO ESCAPE THE SCENE, BUT IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE SECRETS OF THE PALACE AND THE MYSTERIOUS FROZEN FIGURE, SHE SUBMERGES THE BASEMENT IN WATER. AND SO KAGUYA SETS OUT ON A JOURNEY WITH BAMBI AND GOLD, BUT...

KAGUYA HARUYAMA

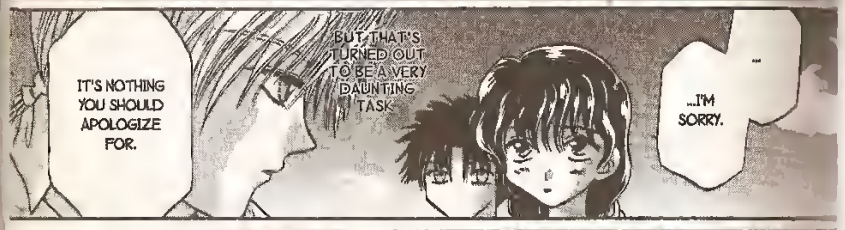
A YOUNG GIRL WITH BLACK HAIR AND BLUE EYES, WITH NO MEMORY OF HER PAST BEFORE THE AGE OF FOUR SHE IS SAID TO BE THE "GIRL OF ANANAI," THE KEY TO THE FUTURE OF THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL UNIVERSES.

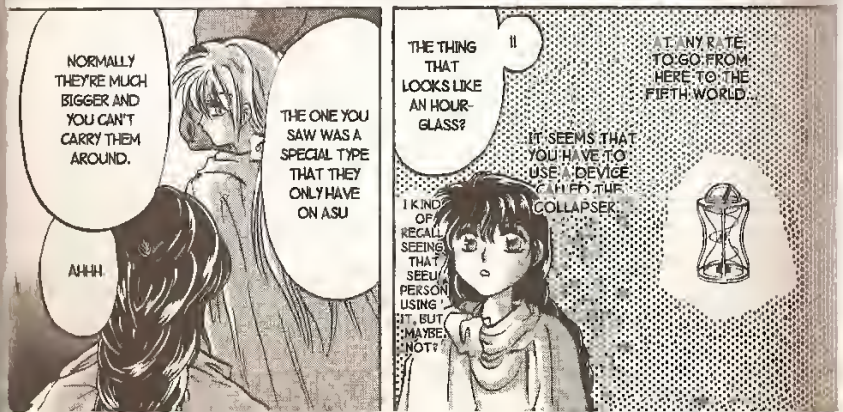
A MONTH LATER...
NADJA...
..LET'S GO HOME.

SO YOU WANT TO TRY TO SKIN THE RABBIT TODAY?
EVERYDAY, ALL I DO IS EAT THE RABBIT THAT KAGAMI CATCHES AND YOU SKIN...
..SO THIS IS THE LEAST I CAN DO!!
DON'T WORRY, IT'S ALREADY DEAD. IT WON'T STRUGGLE.
PLOP
BEEK
YOU USED TO BRING BACK LOTS OF POISONOUS HERBS BEFORE...
..BUT NOW YOU DON'T. NOT REALLY
...REALLY?
HMMM...
..WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO EAT THESE
I'M BEGINNING TO LEARN QUITE A FEW WAYS TO WEAVE ...
SMILE SMILE
I GATHERED A LOT OF TREE VINE, AS WELL, AND HUNG IT OUT TO DRY. I MIGHT MAKE A BASKET OR A BAG WITH IT!!
HA! BAMBI-CHAN, YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO A THING!!
URM
KYAAA-AHH!!
THE RAIN!!

..THIS PERSON WHO RAISED ME DEMANDED THAT, ABOVE ALL ELSE, I POSSESS A HIGH LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE.
THE ONE OLDER PERSON WHO RAISED ME...WELL, TECHNICALLY, THERE WERE THREE PEOPLE ORIGINALLY, BUT THEY DIED ONE AFTER THE OTHER, SO THAT ONLY LEFT ONE PERSON..
..IT'S SIMPLY BECAUSE I'VE BEEN EDUCATED.
..SHE KNOWS ABOUT REALLY OLD THINGS AND REALLY NEW THINGS AS WELL.
..BAMBI-CHAN NOT ONLY KNOWS THE MAP OF THE AREA SURROUNDING THE PALACE, BUT THIS FAR-OFF-PLACE TOO..
...I SEE, BUT...
AND THAT'S WHY I THINK YOU'RE SO INTELLIGENT.
..IT'S NOT THAT YOU JUST KNOW, BUT THAT WHAT YOU KNOW IS SO USEFUL.
I DON'T THINK THAT'S SOMETHING YOU CAN JUST LEARN.
SO SHE KNOWS ABOUT THE BACK-ROADS AND ABOUT THIS OLD FOREST CABIN..
...IT'S BECAUSE OF HER THAT WE WERE ABLE TO TRAVEL WITHOUT ATTRACTING TONS OF ATTENTION.
...WHAT?
WELL....
...I AGREE THAT KNOWING THINGS DOES MAKE A PERSON GREAT, BUT..
...LIAR! OF COURSE IT WOULDN'T STRUGGLE.
DID ANYONE SAY THAT THIS WAS A RABBIT?
HEE HEE
...
..THERE'S ONE THING I'VE DEFINITELY LEARNED....
DURING OUR TRAVELS TOGETHER..
HEE HEE HEE
...BAMBI-CHAN REALLY IS A VERY INTELLIGENT PERSON.
ALTHOUGH I FELT IT FROM THE BEGINNING..

BACK AT BAMBI'S PALACE, KAGAMI ONCE TOLD ME WHEN HE MOMENTARILY REGAINED HIS SANITY.
AT ANY RATE, WE'RE STILL SUCCESSFULLY ON THE RUN
...THAT OUR CURRENT GOAL WAS TO SEEK OUT EITHER THE MAD PRINCE SEEU OR THE SAGE OF THE FIFTH WORLD, MESHIE LALAGOTT.
--I WISH HE'D GIVE ME A LITTLE MORE TO WORK WITH.

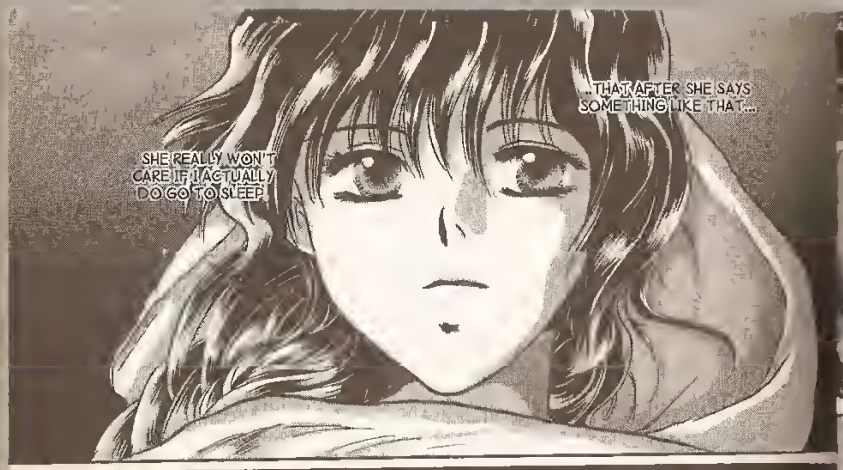

IT'S NOTHING YOU SHOULD APOLOGIZE FOR.
BUT THAT'S TURNED OUT TO BE A VERY DAUNTING TASK.
...I'M SORRY.
...

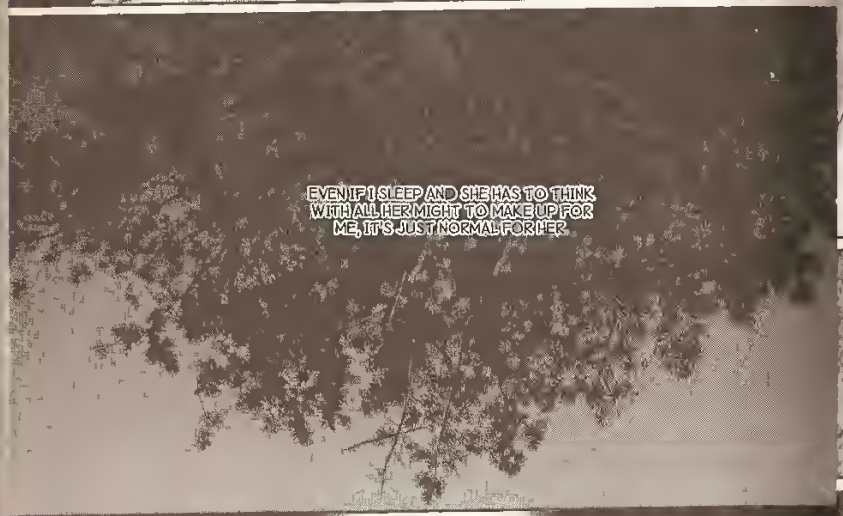

NORMALLY THEY'RE MUCH BIGGER AND YOU CAN'T CARRY THEM AROUND.
THE ONE YOU SAW WAS A SPECIAL TYPE THAT THEY ONLY HAVE ON ASU
AHHH
THE THING THAT LOOKS LIKE AN HOUR-GLASS?
I KIND OF RECALL SEEING THAT SEEU PERSON USING IT, BUT MAYBE NOT?
IT SEEMS THAT YOU HAVE TO USE A DEVICE CALLED THE COLLAPSER.
AT ANY RATE, TO GO FROM HERE TO THE FIFTH WORLD...

...MORE THAN ANYTHING I'VE LEARNED THAT...
...I'M PRETTY USELESS NO MATTER WHAT.
HA HA HA!
..?...
..WHAT ARE YOU LAUGHING ABOUT?

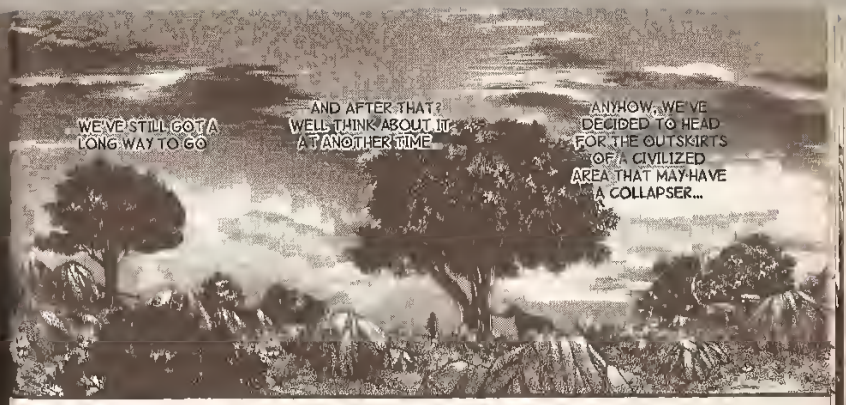
HIS EYES ARE SHARP AND HE HEARS REALLY WELL, TOO, AND HE DOES WATCH DUTY FOR US WITHOUT FALLING ASLEEP.

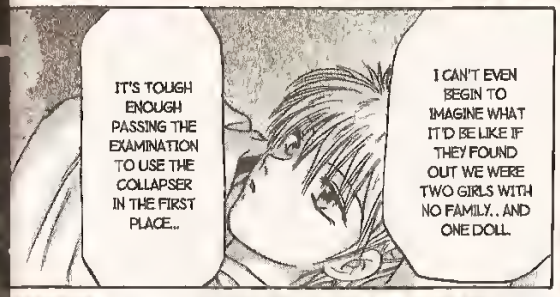
..THE OTHER THING I'VE LEARNED IS THAT KAGAMI IS REALLY AMAZING.
LET'S SEE. AS FAR AS YOU CAN TELL, THERE ARE NO OTHER PEOPLE AROUND, RIGHT?
IT'S BECAUSE OF KAGAMI THAT WE'RE SAFE. NO MATTER WHAT ANIMAL TRAIL WE MIGHT FOLLOW...
...AND...
BUT IT'S BEEN SUCH A LONG TIME SINCE WE LAST SLEPT UNDER A ROOF

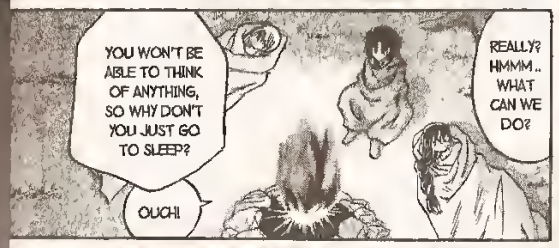

..THAT AFTER SHE SAYS SOMETHING LIKE THAT...
SHE REALLY WON'T CARE IF I ACTUALLY DO GO TO SLEEP.

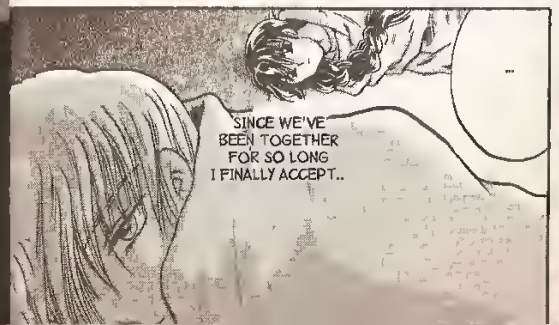

EVEN IF I SLEEP AND SHE HAS TO THINK WITH ALL HER MIGHT TO MAKE UP FOR ME, IT'S JUST NORMAL FOR HER.

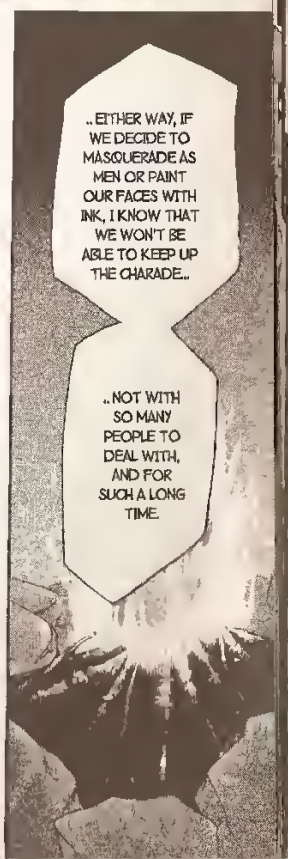
...I WISH I COULD BE MORE OF A HELP TO HER.
THAT'S WHY AT TIMES LIKE THIS...


WE'VE STILL GOT A LONG WAY TO GO
AND AFTER THAT? WELL THINK ABOUT IT AT ANOTHER TIME.
ANYHOW, WE'VE DECIDED TO HEAD FOR THE OUTSKIRTS OF A CIVILIZED AREA THAT MAY HAVE A COLLAPSER...


IT'S TOUGH ENOUGH PASSING THE EXAMINATION TO USE THE COLLAPSER IN THE FIRST PLACE...
I CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO IMAGINE WHAT IT'D BE LIKE IF THEY FOUND OUT WE WERE TWO GIRLS WITH NO FAMILY.. AND ONE DOLL.


YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO THINK OF ANYTHING, SO WHY DON'T YOU JUST GO TO SLEEP?
OUCH!
REALLY? HMMM.. WHAT CAN WE DO?


SINCE WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER FOR SO LONG I FINALLY ACCEPT..
..


..EITHER WAY, IF WE DECIDE TO MASQUERADE AS MEN OR PAINT OUR FACES WITH INK, I KNOW THAT WE WON'T BE ABLE TO KEEP UP THE CHARADE..
..NOT WITH SO MANY PEOPLE TO DEAL WITH, AND FOR SUCH A LONG TIME.

HUH? URM...
...WHAT DID YOU SAY, BAMBI?
...LIKE I SAID...
..BUT...
...EVEN AFTER TAKING SOMEONE LIKE ME WITH HER, AND AFTER BEING FORCED OUT OF HER HOME LIKE THAT...
..SHE'S NEVER BLAMED ANYONE.
IT'S NOT FOR SOMEONE ELSE'S BENEFIT.
SHE SAYS IT'S NOT EVEN BECAUSE SHE HAS A WORLD THAT SHE WANTS TO PROTECT.
IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE IT'S REALLY FOR HERSELF..
OF COURSE.
..A LOT OF IT HAS TO DO WITH ME FEELING SO USELESS, BUT...
..SHE SAID SHE WOULDN'T BE SAD AT ALL IF THE UNIVERSE, IF EVERYTHING, WAS DESTROYED.
HEY, KAGAMI? RECENTLY..
...I WAS THINKING ABOUT WHAT SORT OF PERSON BAMBI IS.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
SHE CAN DO ALL THESE THINGS THAT I CAN'T. SHE'S PRETTY AND SO SMART...
..SHE'S SO COOL, ISN'T SHE?
..TO TELL THE TRUTH...
...I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT SHE'S REALLY THINKING.
OH!
I FOUND IT!
BAMBI-CHAN REALLY SEEMS TO LIKE THIS STUFF.
WE CAN MAKE TEA OUT OF IT.

...I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL INTRIGUED BY HER.
I ADMIT. I THOUGHT OF THAT POSSIBILITY TOO, BUT...
...I'M NOT SURE WHY... I JUST DIDN'T LIKE IT.
IT WASN'T RIGHT.
HUH? BUT IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT...
IT'S NOT MY FIRST CHOICE, BUT IT'S NOT SOMETHING I'M TOTALLY AGAINST.
IF GEO IS CHOSEN BY YOU OR IF I'M PLACED IN THE EMPEROR'S HAREM, WHAT HAPPENS HAPPENS, AND/ THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO TO FIX IT, RIGHT?
...ALTHOUGH I CAN'T IMAGINE SIDING WITH GEO...
...THAT SAID, WHAT DOES IT REALLY MATTER?
...WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST GIVE ME UP AND ENTER THE INNER PALACE WILLINGLY? THE INNER PALACE IS WAY BEYOND THE SCOPE OF MY IMAGINATION.
WHY WOULD I?
SO INSTEAD OF CHOOSING TO DO SOMETHING PAINFUL AND DANGEROUS LIKE THIS...
I MIGHT NOT LIKE IT, BUT I DON'T HATE IT.
IT'S JUST NOT MY FIRST CHOICE.
SO I WOULD BE SAFE... AND--?
...AND?
EVEN IF THE END CAME, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TO BE AFRAID OF ANYTHING.
BECAUSE IF YOU DID, YOU'D DEFINITELY BE SAFE.

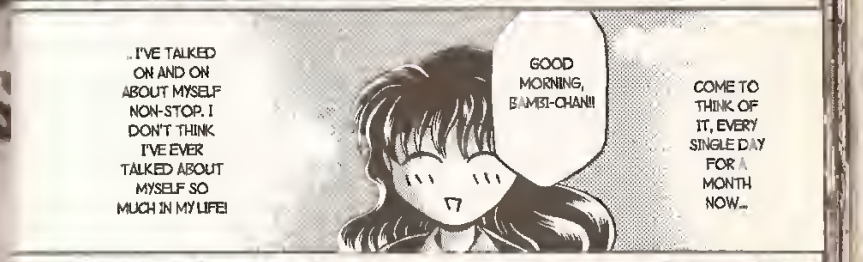
THERE'S NO MEANING, BUT A VALUE..
THOSE ARE TWO VERY DIFFERENT THINGS, AREN'T THEY?
EVEN THOUGH I BELIEVE THAT LIFE ITSELF HAS NO MEANING...
...TO GO FURTHER BY ELIMINATING ITS VALUE AS WELL...
..I DON'T UNDERSTAND..
I'M NOT VERY SMART, SO I DON'T REALLY GET IT, BUT..
IT SOUNDS HARSH, YET...
..I THINK SHE'S SAYING SOMETHING VERY KIND AS WELL. I...
...SHE..
TO TRUST THAT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE OR THE WORLD CAN'T BE HELPED...
...BUT THEN APPLYING A VALUE TO LIFE...?
..BAMBI-CHAN..
..IT'S HARD TO UNDERSTAND..
ぽん

MY GOAL IS TO BE THE ULTIMATE DWARVEN SHOEMAKER!!
MY HUGE EFFORT WITH THIS "I GOTTA DO MY BEST" AURA...
AND I DON'T KNOW IF SHE'S NOTICED OR NOT BUT...

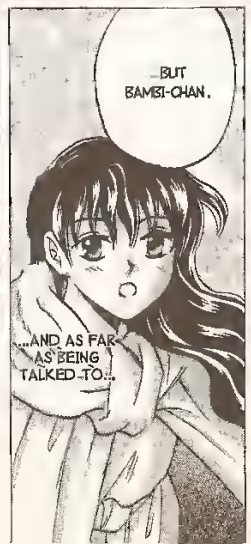
I WANT HER TO LIKE ME JUST A LITTLE.
BAM
I WANT TO MAKE HER LESS TIRED.
BAM
I WANT TO MAKE BAMBI'S MEALS TASTE GREAT.

..WHAT A WEIRD GIRL.
I CAN PRACTICALLY TOUCH WHAT-EVER SHE'S THINKING...
...
HRRRMMM.
AND I DEFINITELY WON'T LET HER HEAR ME COMPLAIN!!

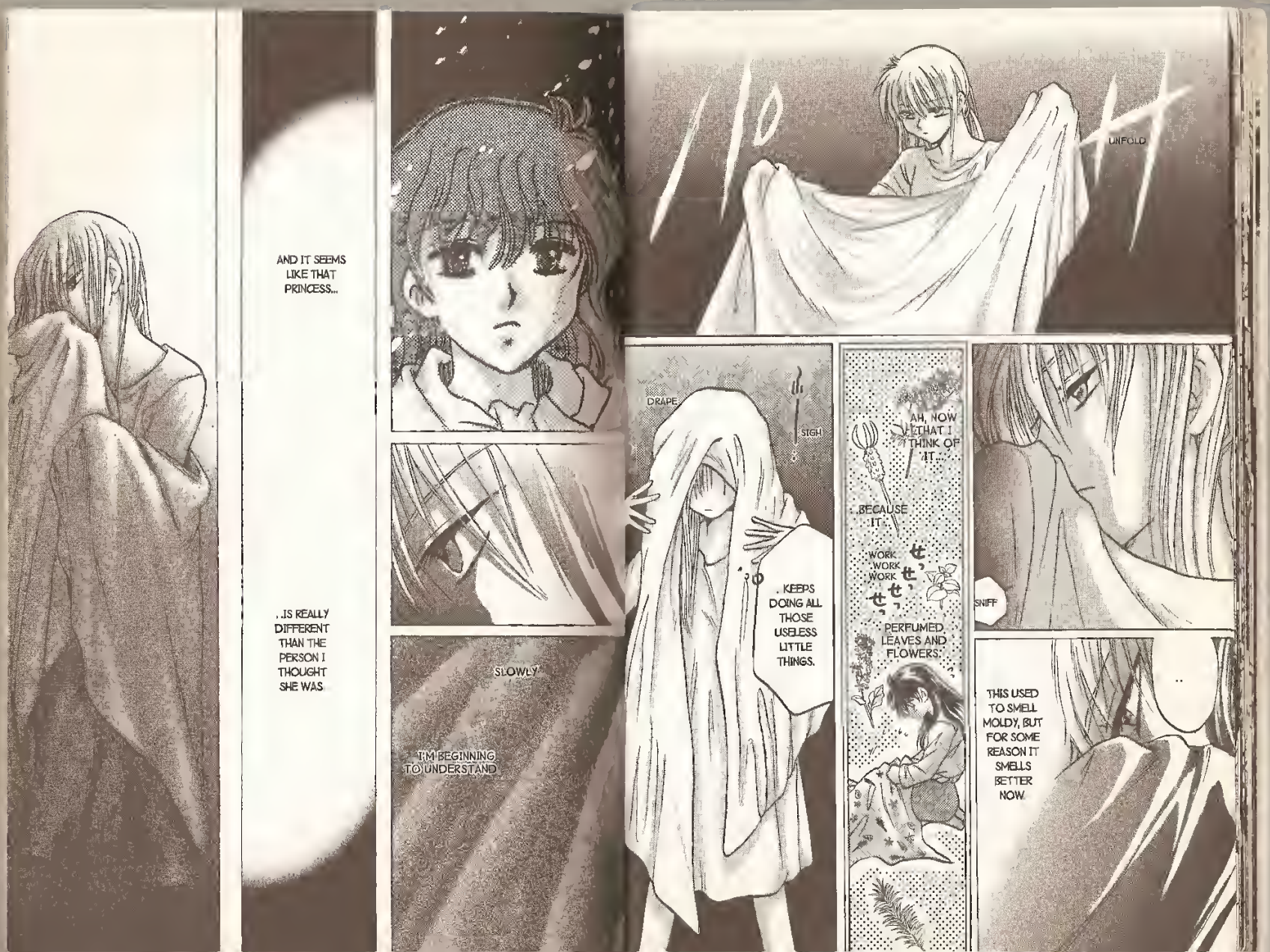
I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK THAT I'VE BEEN TALKING WAAAY TOO MUCH RECENTLY


..I'VE TALKED ON AND ON ABOUT MYSELF NON-STOP. I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER TALKED ABOUT MYSELF SO MUCH IN MY LIFE!
GOOD MORNING, BAMBI-CHAN!!
COME TO THINK OF IT, EVERY SINGLE DAY FOR A MONTH NOW...

I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL A LITTLE OVER-WHELMED WHEN I'M BEING STARED AT BY THOSE BIG EYES OF HERS.
..THIS...
STARE

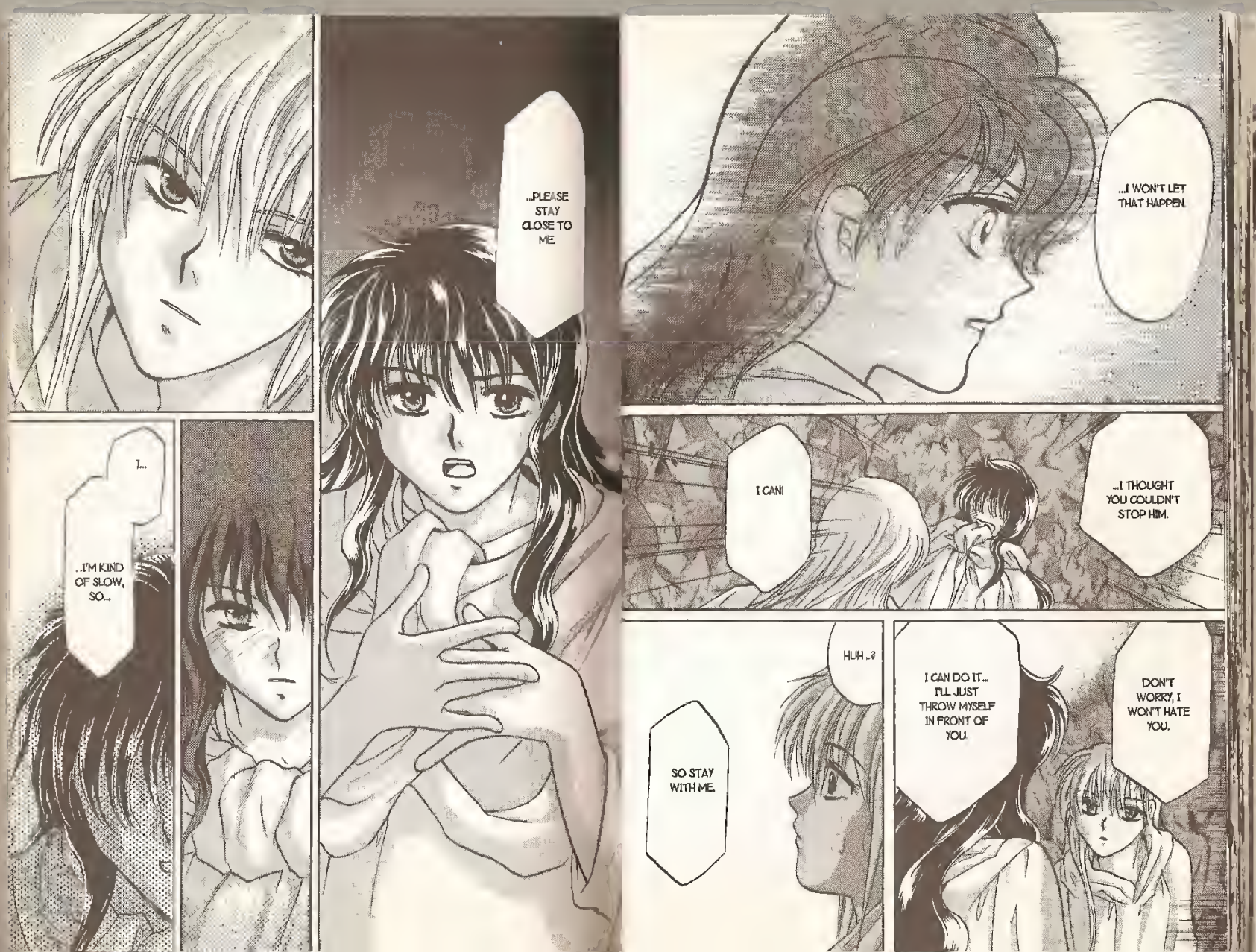

...BUT BAMBI-CHAN.
...AND AS FAR AS BEING TALKED TO...

GUESS WHAT, BAMBI-CHAN?


AND IT SEEMS LIKE THAT PRINCESS...
...IS REALLY DIFFERENT THAN THE PERSON I THOUGHT SHE WAS.
SLOWLY
I'M BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND
UNFOLD
DRAPE
SIGH
...KEEPS DOING ALL THOSE USELESS LITTLE THINGS.
AH, NOW THAT I THINK OF IT...
...BECAUSE IT...
WORK WORK WORK
PERFUMED LEAVES AND FLOWERS.
SNIFF
THIS USED TO SMELL MOLDY, BUT FOR SOME REASON IT SMELLS BETTER NOW.

TELL ME RIGHT AWAY IF SOMEONE COMES CLOSE.
CAN YOU BE EVEN MORE AWARE OF PEOPLE AROUND US?
ONCE HE STARTS, I CAN'T STOP HIM.
IF SOMEONE TRIES TO CAPTURE ME...
..WELL...
...KAGAMI WILL SURELY KILL THAT PERSON
IN ORDER TO CONVINCE SOMEONE NOT TO SEND ANY-MORE WASTED SACRIFICES AFTER YOU.
MAYBE HE'S BEEN PROGRAMMED TO KILL AS MANY OTHER WIT-NESSES AS HE CAN, OTHER THAN YOU.
WHERE ELSE DO YOU FEEL THE PRESENCE OF PEOPLE?
...AND OVER HERE, AS WELL?
...SO THERE ARE LOTS OF THEM OVER HERE...
IT CAN'T BE HELPED. WE'RE RIGHT NEAR A MAJOR CROSSROADS.
OVER THERE, TOO.
.. WE CAN'T GET A BREAK, CAN WE?
...AND TRY OUR BEST TO MANEUVER THROUGH THE GAPS BETWEEN THE CARAVANS.
LOOKS LIKE WE'LL HAVE TO MOVE IN A LITTLE CLOSER...
...THERE'S PROBABLY A MARKET SET UP THERE.
IT COULD BE HARD TO CARRY ON WITHOUT CROSSING PATHS WITH ANYONE..

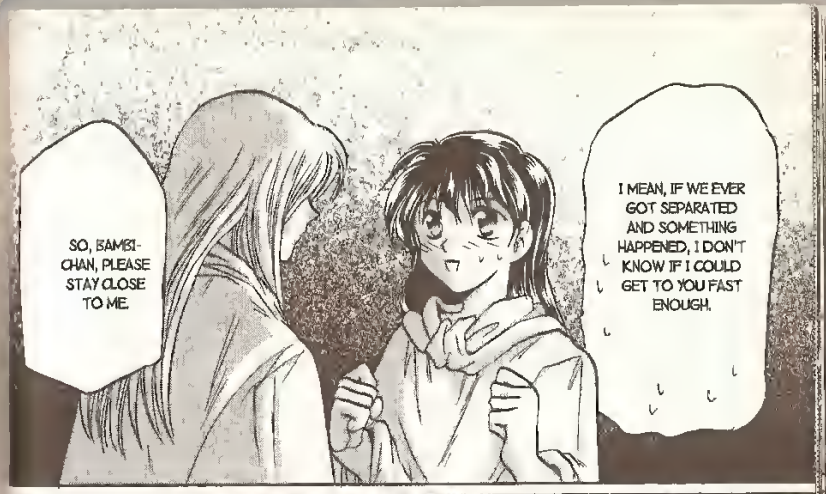
HUH?
IN OTHER WORDS...
LET'S JUST SAY THAT SOMETHING HAPPENS AND HE HAS TO PROTECT YOU..
..ALONG WITH EVERYONE ELSE.
HE WOULD END UP KILLING ME, AS WELL.
IF IT WERE ME, I'D DO THE SAME THING.
BUT...
IF THIS DOLL WAS TRULY CREATED TO PROTECT THE PRINCESS OF CHOOSING FROM THE WORLD...
SO MAYBE THE ONLY REASON HE HASN'T KILLED ME YET...
...IS BECAUSE HE HASN'T BEEN ORDERED TO DO SO.
THAT'S RIGHT...
OF COURSE...
..IT'S JUST A HYPOTHESIS.
JUST AS I THOUGHT... ...YOU ARE PRETTY SMART, AREN'T YOU?
EVERYONE... BUT ME?
DOES THAT MEAN THAT, BAMS!...
...!?

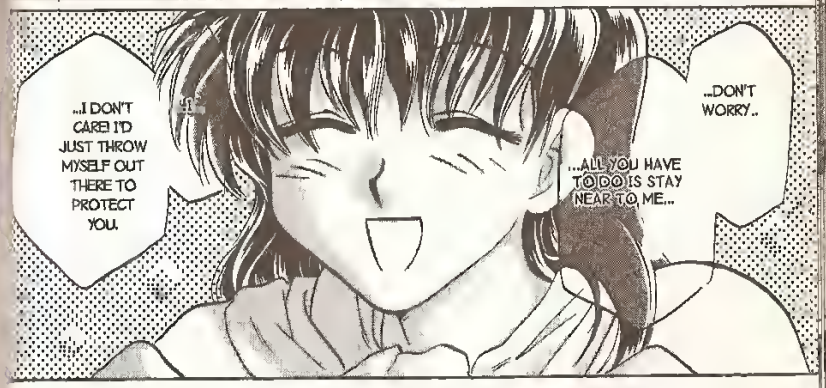

..PLEASE STAY CLOSE TO ME.
I...
..I'M KIND OF SLOW, SO...
...I WON'T LET THAT HAPPEN
I CAN!
...I THOUGHT YOU COULDN'T STOP HIM.
HUH ..?
SO STAY WITH ME.
I CAN DO IT... I'LL JUST THROW MYSELF IN FRONT OF YOU.
DON'T WORRY, I WON'T HATE YOU.

SO WHY DON'T YOU STOP CALLING ME BAMBI-CHAN? IT'S NOT NATURAL.
HMM?
WE'VE COME SO FAR, AND LEARNED AND SEEN A LOT TOGETHER, HAVEN'T WE?
UH-HUH.

SO.
..ABOUT ME.
ぱあっ
BLUSH
OH.
UHM.. YEAH.
YOU DON'T NEED THE CHAN

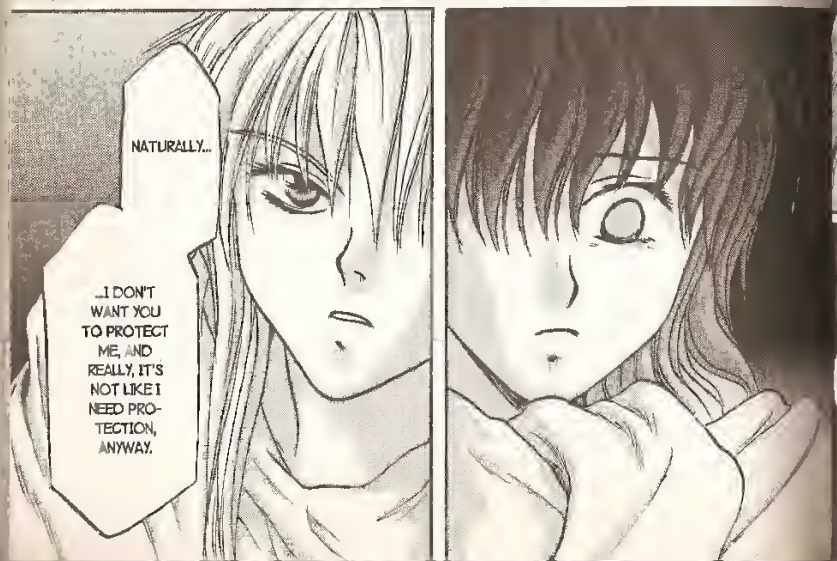
...WELL...
...YOU NORMALLY CALL ME "PRINCESS" OR "YOU," AND YOU RARELY USE MY REAL NAME.
24h 24h 24h
BLUSH BLUSH
...I WAS, WASN'T I?
WOULD YOU JUST CALL ME BY MY REAL NAME?

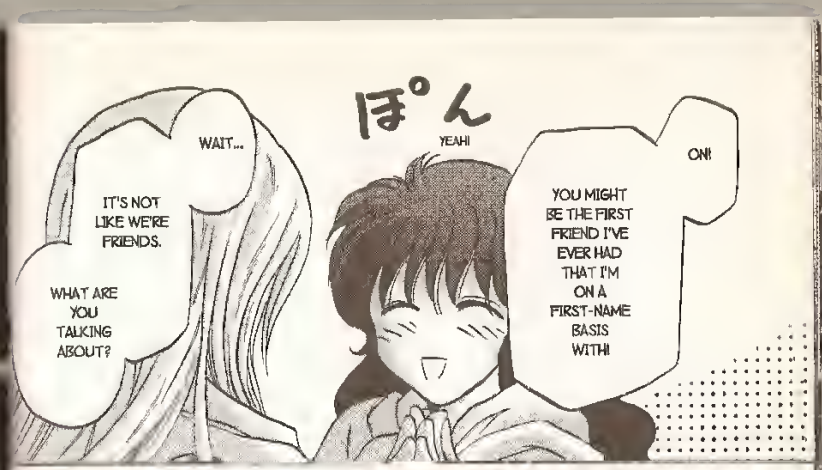

SO, BAMBI-CHAN, PLEASE STAY CLOSE TO ME.
I MEAN, IF WE EVER GOT SEPARATED AND SOMETHING HAPPENED, I DON'T KNOW IF I COULD GET TO YOU FAST ENOUGH.


...I DON'T CARE! I'D JUST THROW MYSELF OUT THERE TO PROTECT YOU.
..DON'T WORRY..
...ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS STAY NEAR TO ME...

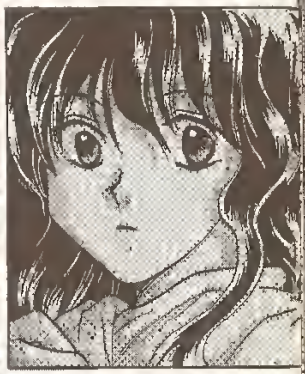
...YOU KNOW...
...

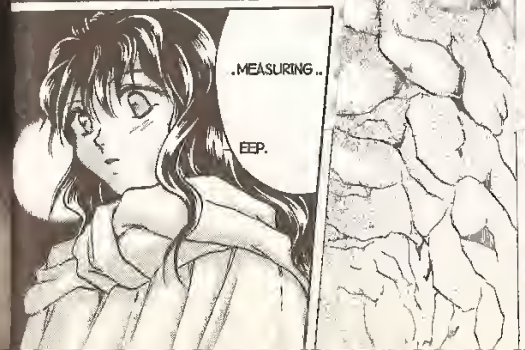
CAN YOU DO ME A FAVOR AND JUST IGNORE ME?
..NOT TO BE RUDE, BUT..
..I DON'T THINK I CAN STAND YOUR SMUG, "KNOW-IT-ALL" EXPRESSION.

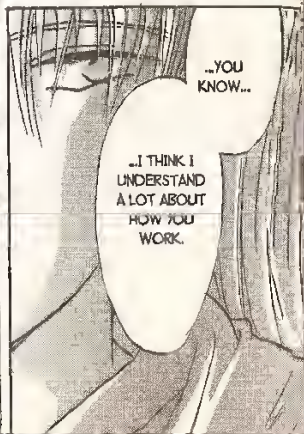

NATURALLY...
...I DON'T WANT YOU TO PROTECT ME, AND REALLY, IT'S NOT LIKE I NEED PROTECTION, ANYWAY.


ぽん
WAIT...
YEAH!
IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE FRIENDS.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
YOU MIGHT BE THE FIRST FRIEND I'VE EVER HAD THAT I'M ON A FIRST-NAME BASIS WITH!
OH!

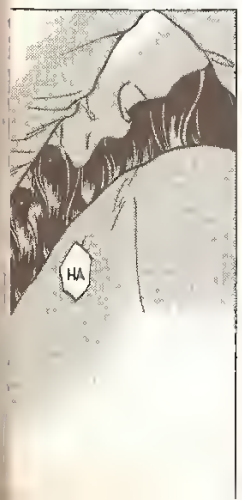
I ALSO KNOW HOW WELL YOUR MIND WORKS. I'VE BEEN MEASURING IT ALL.
I KNOW WHAT YOU CAN DO...
...WHAT YOUR CHARACTER IS, AND WHAT YOU'RE MADE OF.



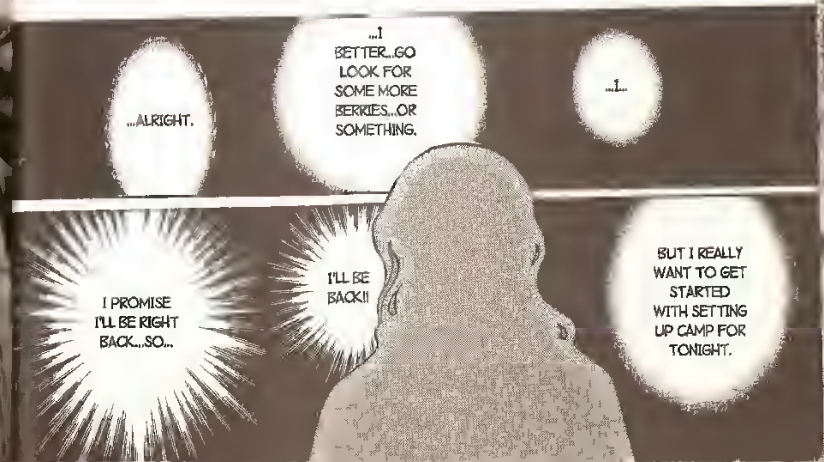

.MEASURING..
EEP.


...YOU KNOW...
...I THINK I UNDERSTAND A LOT ABOUT HOW YOU WORK.

RAN COLD
MY BLOOD.
YOU'RE SUFFOCATING ME.


HA

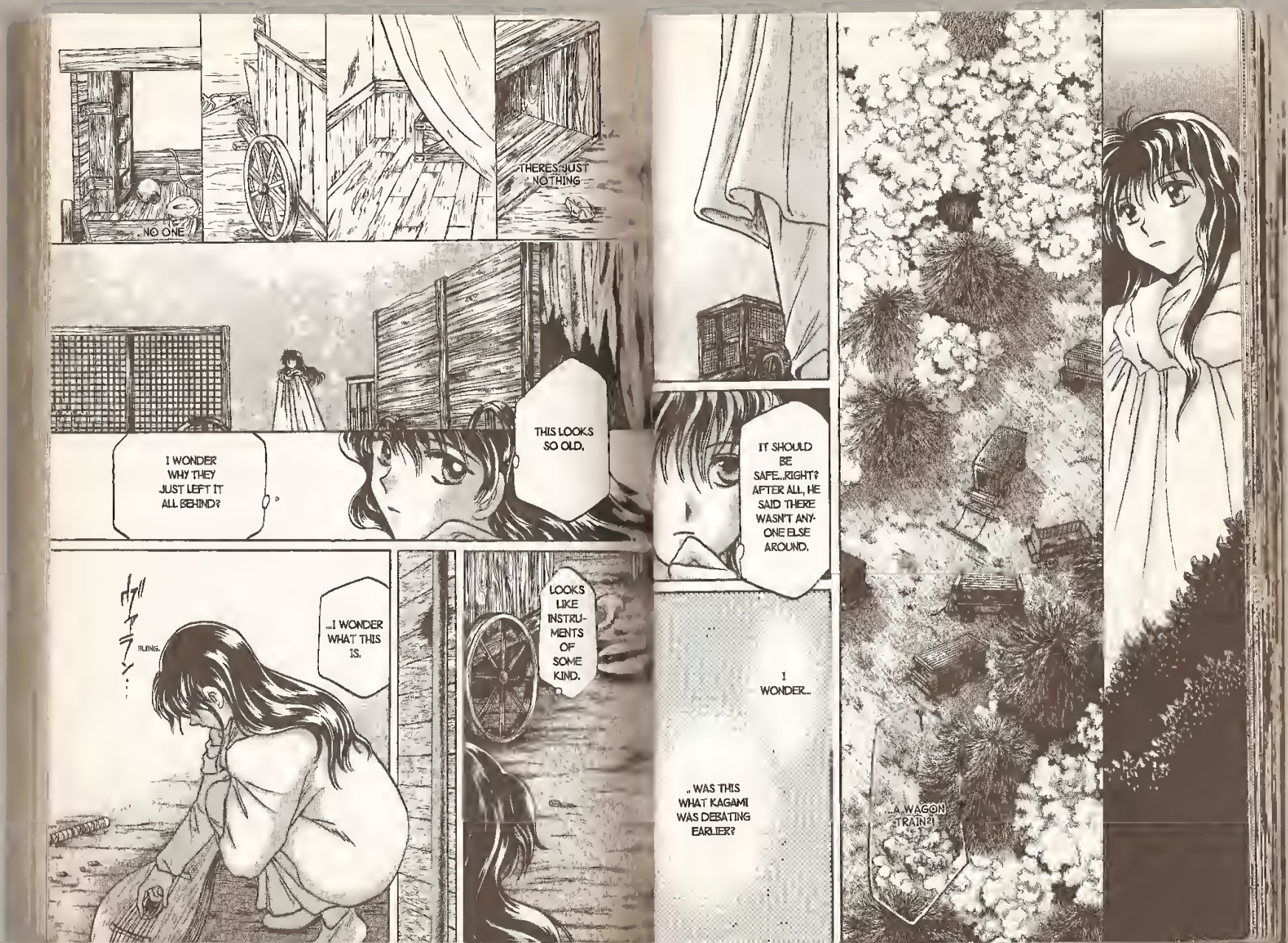
I DON'T THINK I CAN STAND UP.

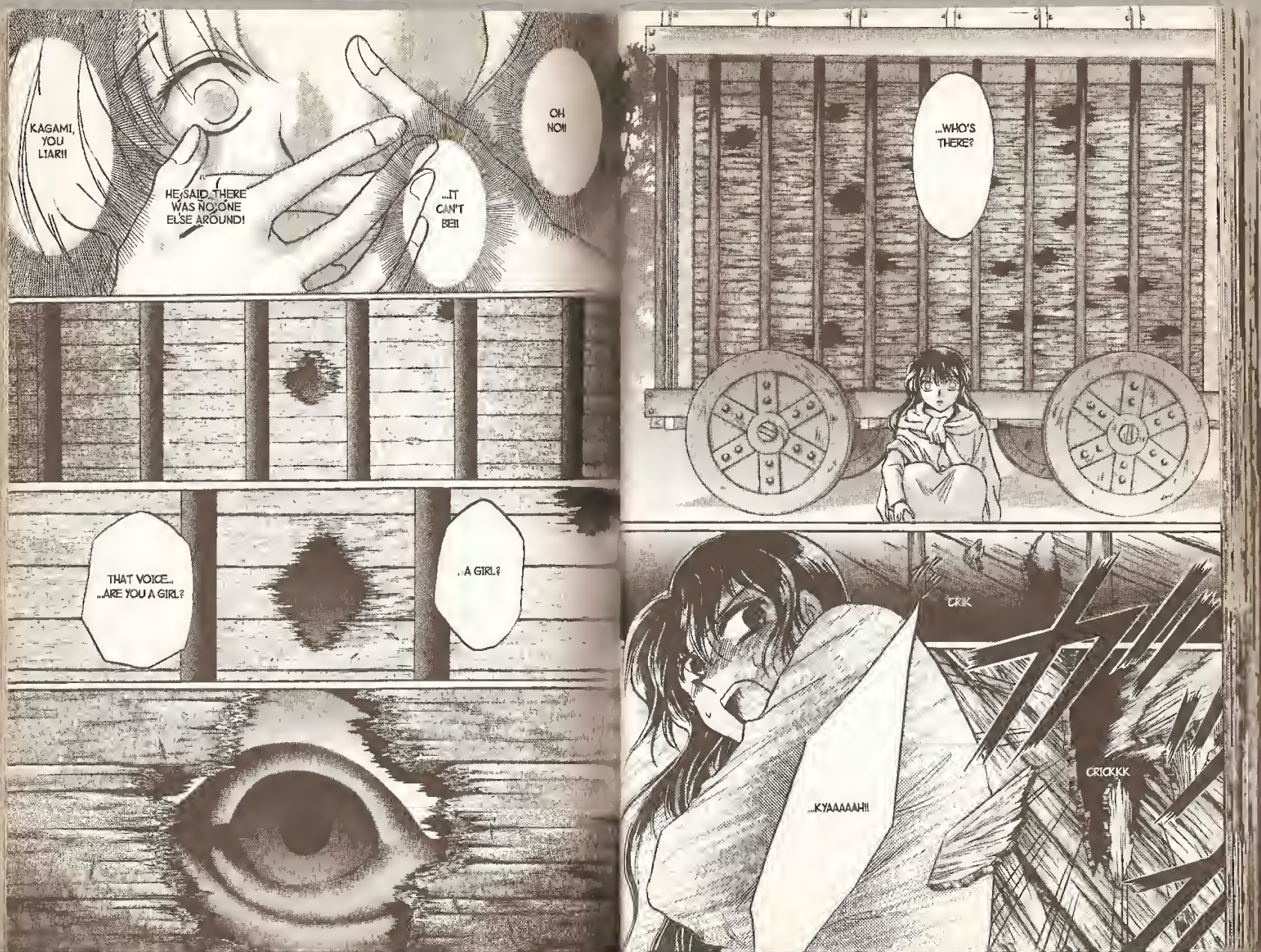

...ALRIGHT.
...I BETTER...GO LOOK FOR SOME MORE BERRIES...OR SOMETHING.
...I...
I PROMISE I'LL BE RIGHT BACK...SO...
I'LL BE BACK!!
BUT I REALLY WANT TO GET STARTED WITH SETTING UP CAMP FOR TONIGHT.

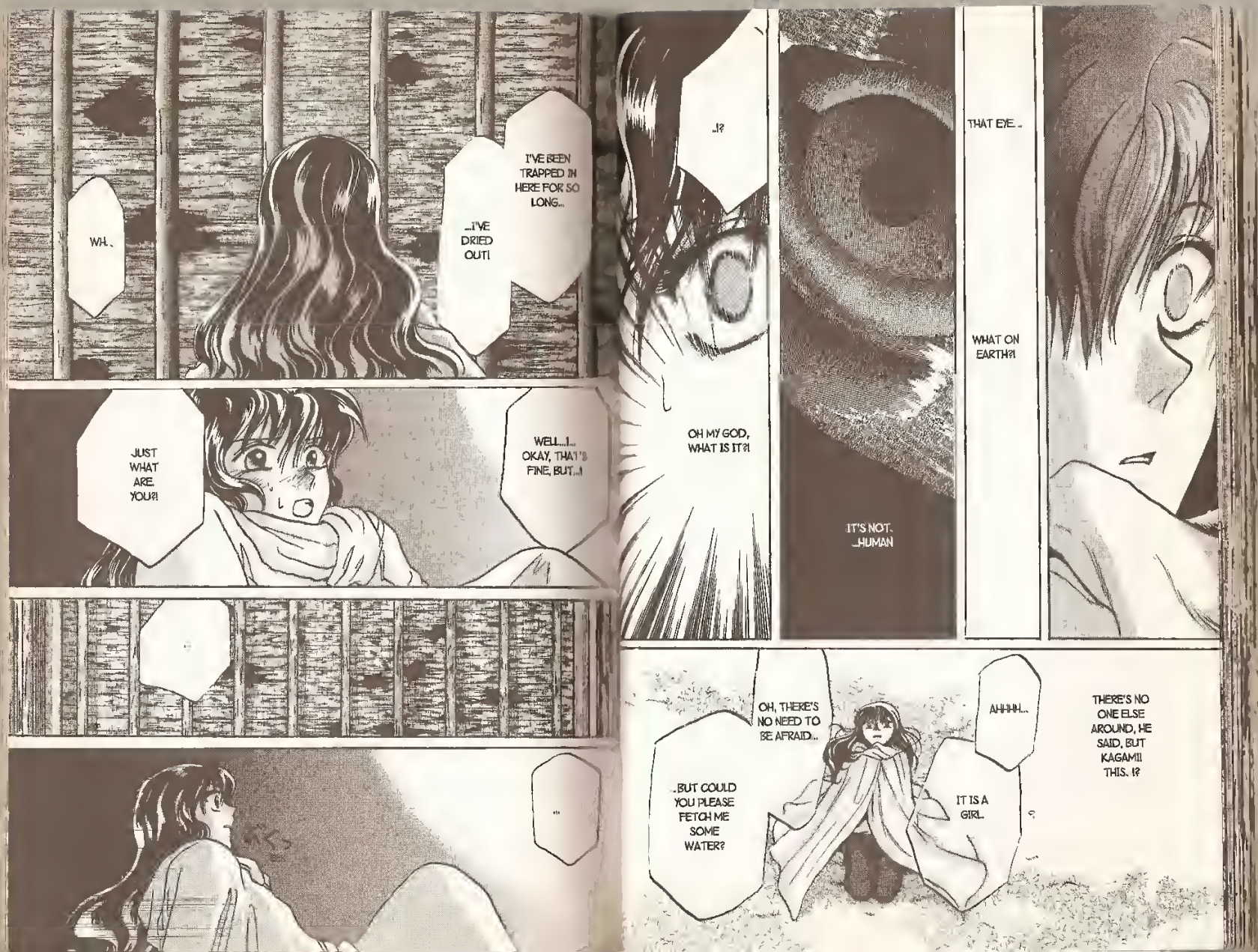
..I GUESS..
I JUST LIKE HER SO MUCH..
BUT SOMEHOW...
I GUESS I...
...I'M NOT READY YET.
..?
KAGAMI?
THERE'S NO ONE ELSE AROUND HERE, RIGHT?
..
NOD.
IS IT JUST ME, OR DID HE LOOK LIKE HE WAS HESITATING SOMETHING?
キュン
ITE
OH NO...
OH..
..I STILL
I'M ALWAYS TRYING...
..SO HARD.
I ALWAYS THINK ABOUT HOW MUCH I REALLY LIKE HER.
BECAUSE I KNEW THAT INSIDE, SHE WAS SUCH A GOOD PERSON
I WONDER WHY..?
BUT...I...
..ALL THE TIME...
...YOUR KNOW-IT-ALL..
..EXPRES-SION...
WHAT?
HA!
I JUST DON'T GET IT.

SNORT.
THE LOOK ON HER FACE. IT'S LIKE THE WHOLE WORLD FELL DOWN ALL AROUND HER, BUT...?
DO YOU THINK I MIGHT HAVE SAID SOMETHING WRONG, NADJA?
PULL
I GUESS I DON'T TOTALLY UNDERSTAND.
..SHE DOESN'T LOOK IT, BUT
..OUR PRINCESS OF THE CHOOSING COULD HARDLY BE AVERAGE.
..AND REALLY...
SHE'S GOT A LOT OF GUTS I KNOW THAT FOR SURE..
CAN YOU FIND A RABBIT.
I'LL BE BACK SOON.
..AND BRING IT TO BAMBI..?
..I PROMISE, SO..
IF SOMETHING HAPPENS I'LL CALL YOU...
....
..I DON'T KNOW, BUT...
..JUST LET ME BE ALONE RIGHT NOW

THAT'S WHY I DON'T NEED HER.
BECAUSE I HAVE NOTHING TO GIVE BACK..I DON'T NEED HER
I JUST CAN'T GET USED TO THEM!
THOSE EYES...
...THOSE DEEP BLUE EYES THAT PEER RIGHT THROUGH MY SOUL...
AND THOSE HANDS.. THE TOUCH THAT COMES AFTER SEEING RIGHT THROUGH ME..
SUCH WASTED THOUGHTS.
CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP
CHIRP CHIRP
..!?
RUSTLE RUSTLE
I SHOULD GO BACK..
..BUT...
...I THINK I'VE WANDERED TOO FAR OFF..
I THINK I..
. EMPTY.
AND YET I'M...
I PACK ALL THIS WORTHLESS KNOWL-EDGE IN MY HEAD.

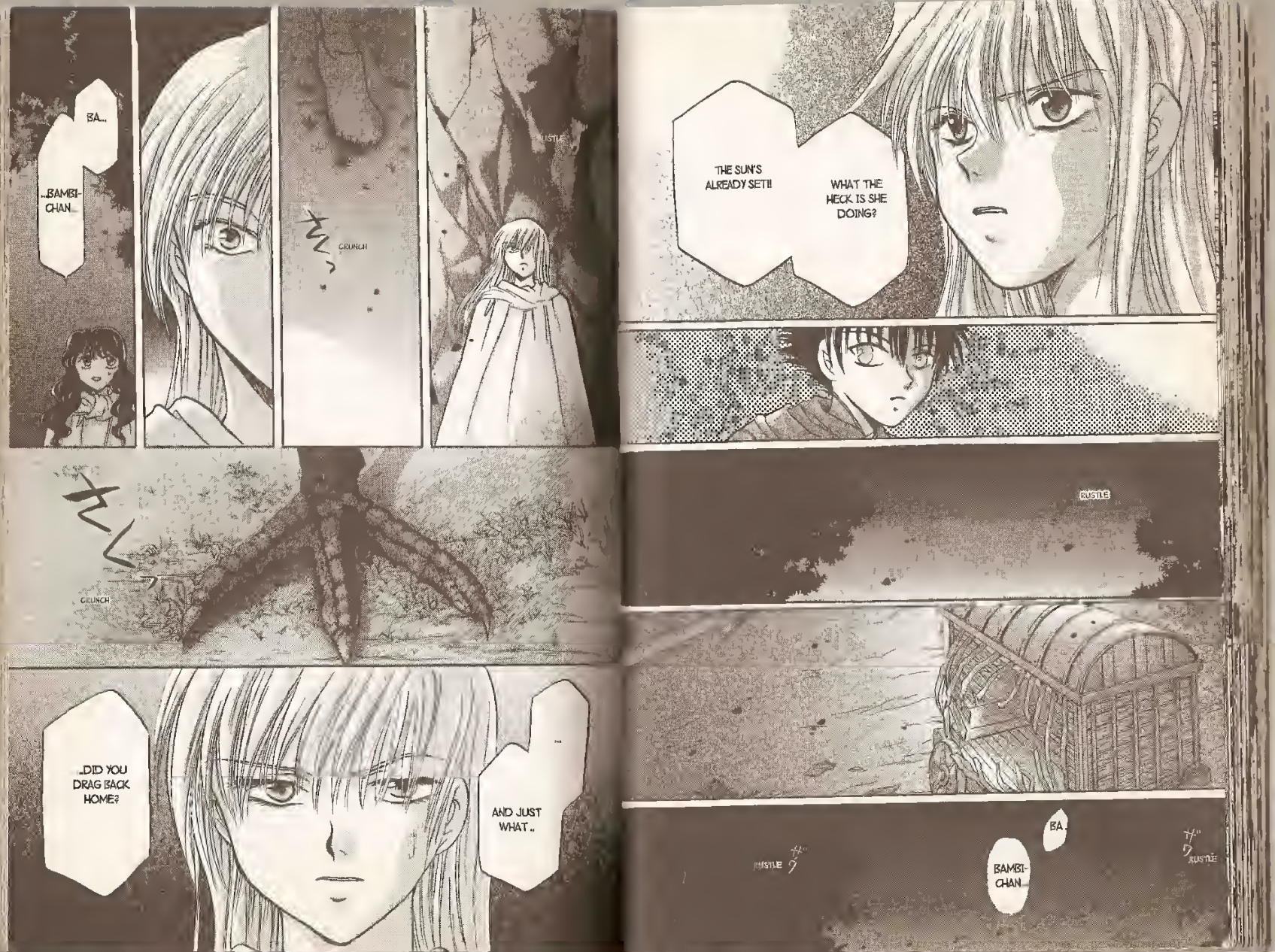

NO ONE
THERE'S JUST NOTHING
I WONDER WHY THEY JUST LEFT IT ALL BEHIND?
THIS LOOKS SO OLD.
...I WONDER WHAT THIS IS.
RUNG.
LOOKS LIKE INSTRU-MENTS OF SOME KIND.
IT SHOULD BE SAFE...RIGHT? AFTER ALL, HE SAID THERE WASN'T ANY-ONE ELSE AROUND.
I WONDER...
.. WAS THIS WHAT KAGAMI WAS DEBATING EARLIER?
...A WAGON TRAIN?!

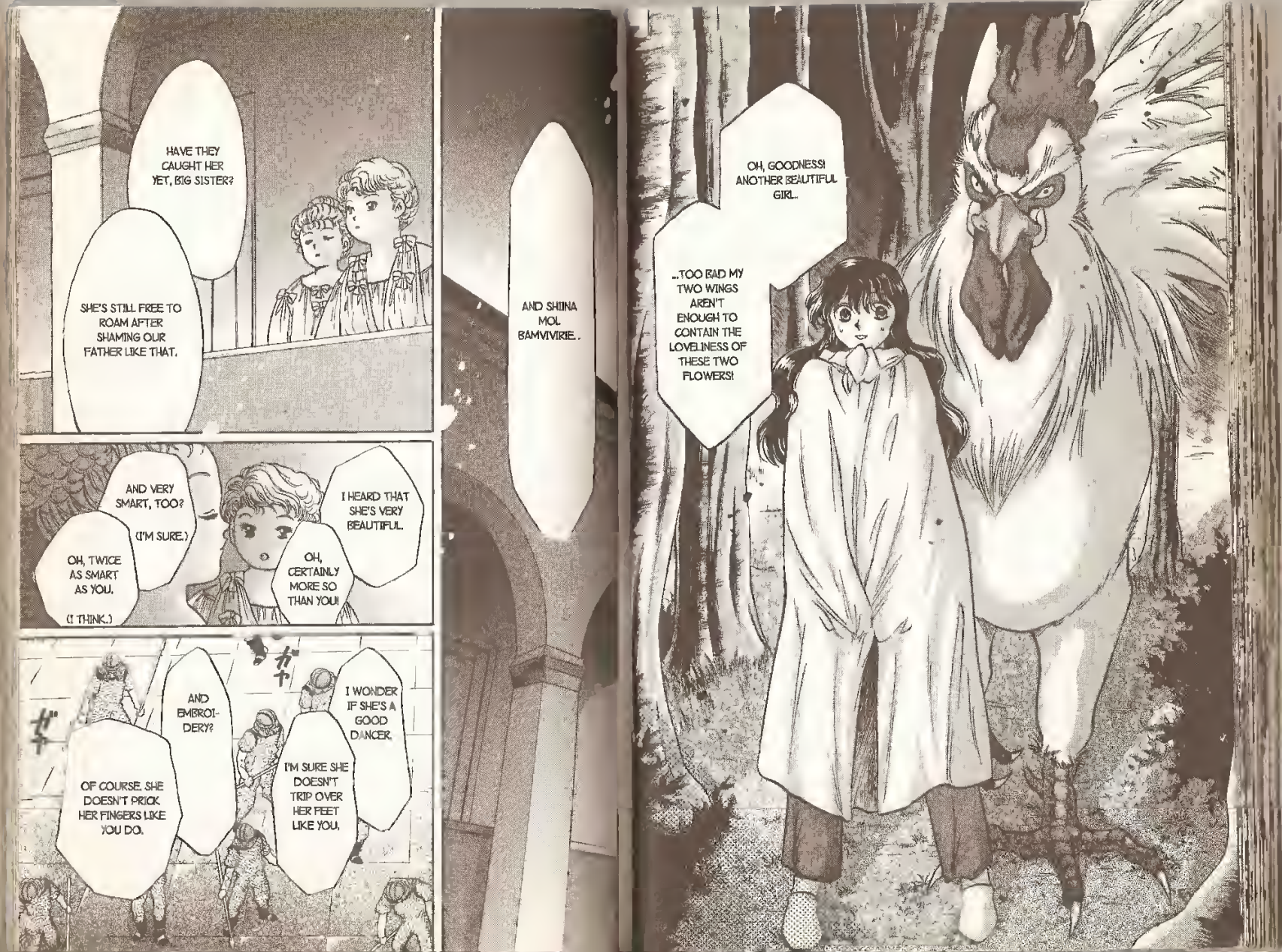

KAGAMI, YOU LIAR!!
HE SAID THERE WAS NO ONE ELSE AROUND!
...IT CAN'T BE!!
OH NO!!
THAT VOICE... ...ARE YOU A GIRL?
...A GIRL?
...WHO'S THERE?
CRIK
CRICKKK
...KYAAAAAH!!

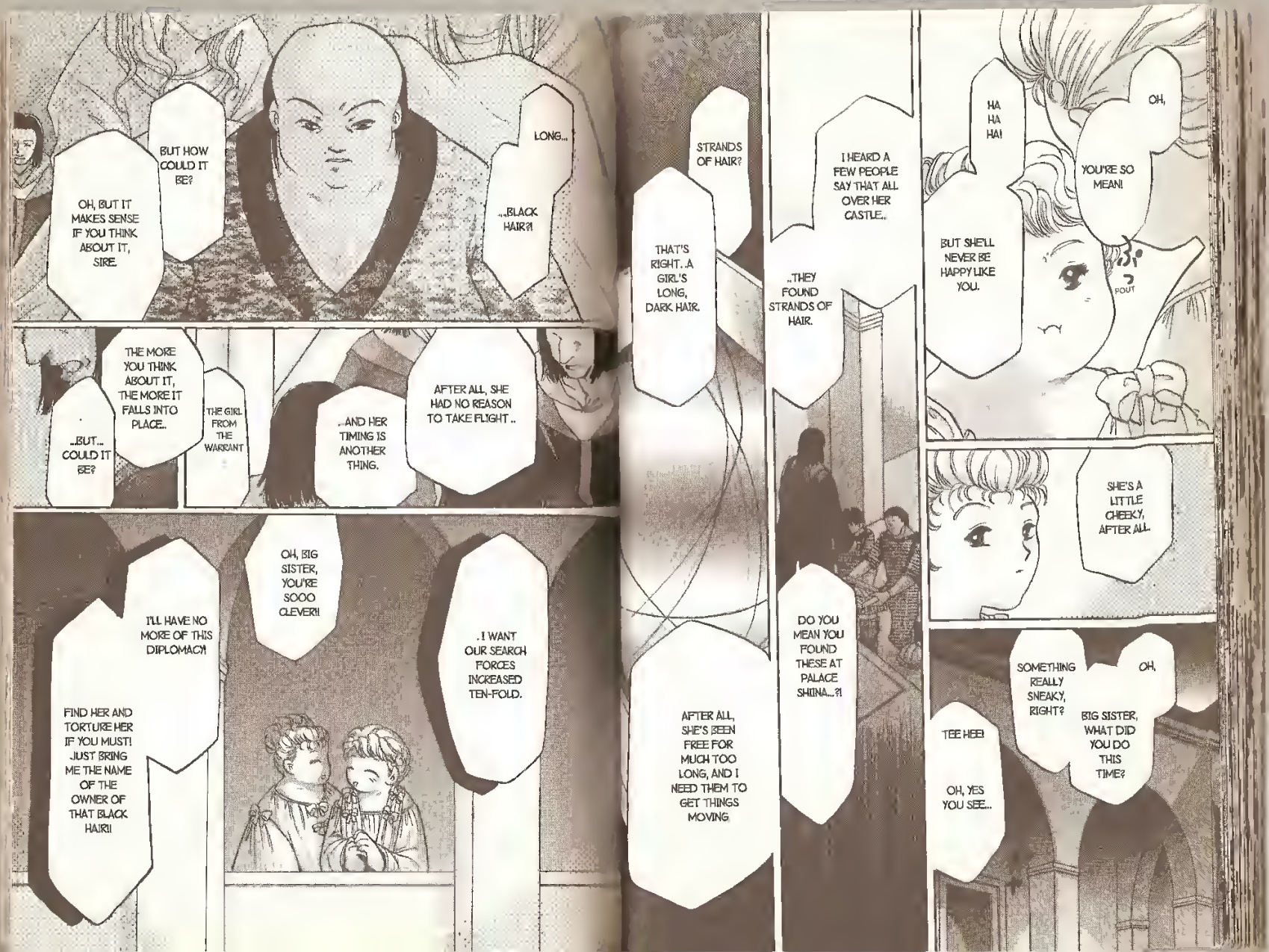

WH..
I'VE BEEN TRAPPED IN HERE FOR SO LONG...
...I'VE DRIED OUT!
JUST WHAT ARE YOU?!
WELL...I... OKAY, THAT'S FINE, BUT...!
...
..!?
OH MY GOD, WHAT IS IT?!
IT'S NOT. ...HUMAN
THAT EYE...
WHAT ON EARTH?!
OH, THERE'S NO NEED TO BE AFRAID..
..BUT COULD YOU PLEASE FETCH ME SOME WATER?
AHHHH...
IT IS A GIRL.
THERE'S NO ONE ELSE AROUND, HE SAID, BUT KAGAMI! THIS..!?

AH. JAPANESE...
IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I HEARD MY MOTHER TONGUE.
CRAAACCCK
WHAT DID YOU...
...JUST SAY...
CRACK
WHA?
TAKEYOSHI WASEDA
MY NAME, DEARIE, IS WASEDA.
YOUR LANGUAGE IS JAPANESE, YES?
OH YES... ...THAT'S RIGHT.

FLAP
FLAP
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
WHA...
..WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU...?!
GRRAAAACCCKKKK
HUH...?


BA...
...BAMBI-CHAN...
CRUNCH
RUSTLE
CRUNCH
...DID YOU DRAG BACK HOME?
...
AND JUST WHAT..
THE SUN'S ALREADY SET!!
WHAT THE HECK IS SHE DOING?
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
BA..
BAMBI-CHAN...
RUSTLE

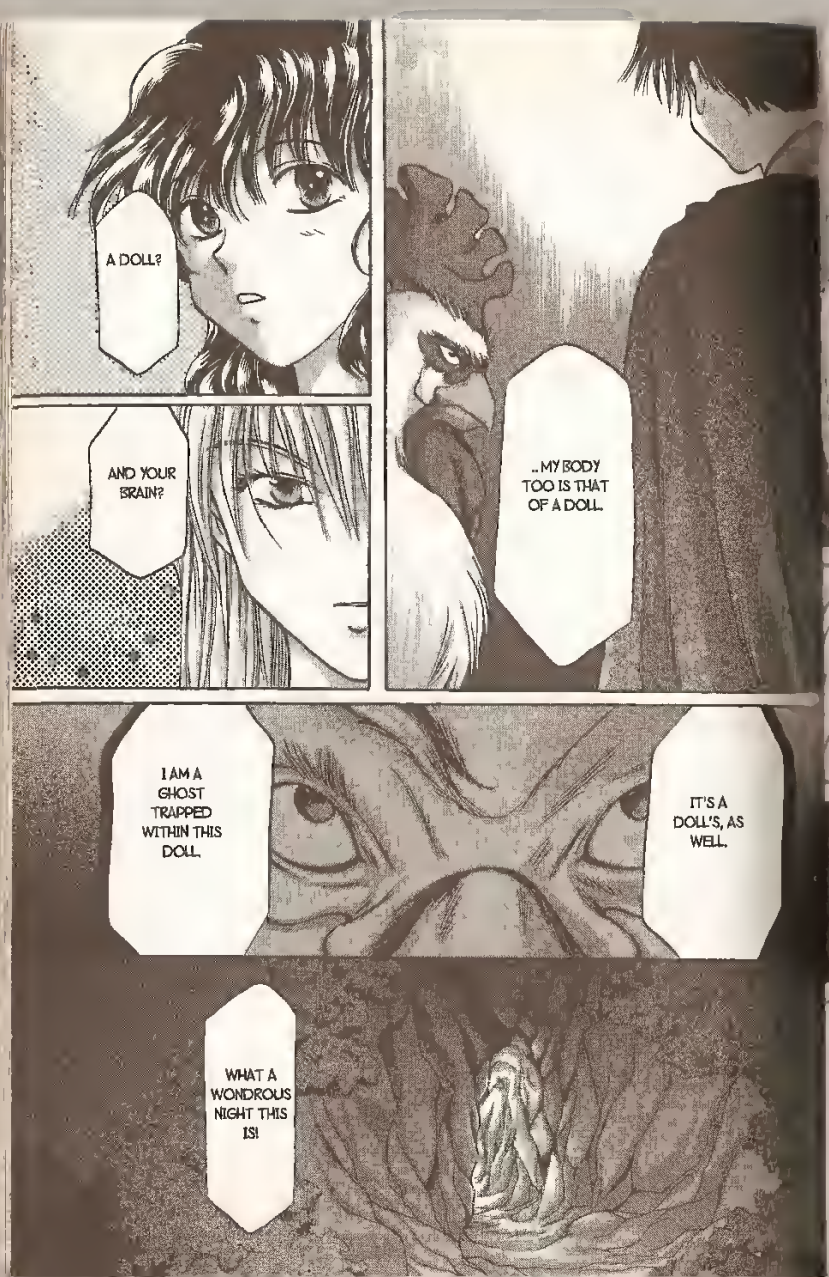

HAVE THEY CAUGHT HER YET, BIG SISTER?
SHE'S STILL FREE TO ROAM AFTER SHAMING OUR FATHER LIKE THAT.
AND VERY SMART, TOO?
(I'M SURE.)
OH, TWICE AS SMART AS YOU.
(I THINK.)
I HEARD THAT SHE'S VERY BEAUTIFUL.
OH, CERTAINLY MORE SO THAN YOU!
AND EMBROI-DERY?
OF COURSE, SHE DOESN'T PRICK HER FINGERS LIKE YOU DO.
I'M SURE SHE DOESN'T TRIP OVER HER FEET LIKE YOU.
I WONDER IF SHE'S A GOOD DANCER.
AND SHIINA MOL BAMVIVIRIE..
OH, GOODNESS! ANOTHER BEAUTIFUL GIRL..
..TOO BAD MY TWO WINGS AREN'T ENOUGH TO CONTAIN THE LOVELINESS OF THESE TWO FLOWERS!


OH, BUT IT MAKES SENSE IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT, SIRE.
BUT HOW COULD IT BE?
LONG...
...BLACK HAIR?!
..BUT... COULD IT BE?
THE MORE YOU THINK ABOUT IT, THE MORE IT FALLS INTO PLACE..
THE GIRL FROM THE WARRANT
..AND HER TIMING IS ANOTHER THING.
AFTER ALL, SHE HAD NO REASON TO TAKE FLIGHT ..
I'LL HAVE NO MORE OF THIS DIPLOMACY!
FIND HER AND TORTURE HER IF YOU MUST! JUST BRING ME THE NAME OF THE OWNER OF THAT BLACK HAIR!!
OH, BIG SISTER, YOU'RE SOOO CLEVER!!
..I WANT OUR SEARCH FORCES INCREASED TEN-FOLD.
STRANDS OF HAIR?
THAT'S RIGHT. A GIRL'S LONG, DARK HAIR.
AFTER ALL, SHE'S BEEN FREE FOR MUCH TOO LONG, AND I NEED THEM TO GET THINGS MOVING
I HEARD A FEW PEOPLE SAY THAT ALL OVER HER CASTLE..
..THEY FOUND STRANDS OF HAIR.
DO YOU MEAN YOU FOUND THESE AT PALACE SHIINA...?!
HA HA HA!
OH,
YOU'RE SO MEAN!
BUT SHE'LL NEVER BE HAPPY LIKE YOU.
POUT
SHE'S A LITTLE CHEEKY, AFTER ALL.
SOMETHING REALLY SNEAKY, RIGHT?
OH,
BIG SISTER, WHAT DID YOU DO THIS TIME?
TEE HEE!
OH, YES YOU SEE...

PLEASE DON'T SCOLD HER, MY SILVER LADY.
SO, THE TIME HAS FINALLY COME THAT I WOULD BE REUNITED WITH THE LIKES OF THIS THING,.
WHAT'S WITH THE POSING CHICKEN?
IT SEEMS THAT FATE HAS LED ME TO YOU LADIES.
...WHAT?
. HE SAID HE WAS ORIGINALLY FROM THE THIRD WORLD.
I DON'T BELIEVE THAT YOU..
...COULD BEGIN TO FATHOM THE DEPTHS OF MY SURPRISE.
...MY DEAR LADIES,
YOU DO KNOW...
I'M SORRY, I'M SO SORRY, BAMBI-CHAN .
. BUT YOU SEE, MR. CHICKEN, HE .
AT LEAST A LITTLE ABOUT THE POSITION YOU'RE IN, RIGHT...?
(THAT THING ABOUT THE WORLDS BEING IN A FRENZY OVER CAPTURING YOU!)
IS THIS...
AHEM. MY NAME, DEAR LADY, IS WASEDA..
...BUT WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE...

BUT AT ANY RATE...
I WAS CAPTURED AND MADE INTO A SIDESHOW ATTRACTION, YOU SEE.
(DRIED ME ALL OUT.)
THEY WERE STARTLED BY ME AND RAN AWAY.
(AND I WAS LEFT IN THAT STEEL CAGE...)
..BUT WHAT COWARDS THOSE BANDITS WERE!
ABOUT TEN YEARS AGO, MY CAPTORS WERE ATTACKED BY BANDITS...
...JUST ABOUT TEN BUCKETS WORTH.
AND AFTER THAT, HE BROKE OUT FROM HIS IRON CAGE HIMSELF.
(IT WAS PRETTY COOL.)
SHE SAVED MY LIFE. I CAN'T BUILD ANY STRENGTH WITHOUT WATER. YOU SEE.
AND WITH NO FOOD OR WATER TO BOOT!
TEN YEARS?
OH MY KINGDOM FOR A BUCKET OF WATER.
OH, WHAT TRAGEDY MIGHT HAVE BEFALLEN ME HAD I NOT MET YOU TWO LADIES?
...
..URM...

ALAS, THESE EYES MAY CRY NO MORE TEARS.
..SO...
ALL I DID WAS BRING WATER TO MR. WASEDA, WHO'D BEEN TRAPPED IN A WAGON.


A DOLL?
AND YOUR BRAIN?
..MY BODY TOO IS THAT OF A DOLL.
I AM A GHOST TRAPPED WITHIN THIS DOLL.
IT'S A DOLL'S, AS WELL.
WHAT A WONDROUS NIGHT THIS IS!

...IT MAY NOT BE APPARENT, BUT I ONCE ATTENDED THE PRESTIGIOUS TOKYO IMPERIAL UNIVERSITY*
MY BIRTHPLACE WAS HIROSHIMA..
..I WAS BORN IN THE THIRD YEAR OF THE TAISHO PERIOD.
...TAKEYOSHI WASEDA...
OH? SO I DID TRAVEL OFF COURSE TIME-WISE, AFTER ALL.
OR WHAT THAT TV CALLS IT
URRRMMM .YOU MEAN TOKYO UNIVERSITY, IF I REMEMBER RIGHT. I THINK MY GRANDFATHER'S GENERATION CALLS IT BY THAT NAME.
* THE NAME TOKYO IMPERIAL UNIVERSITY LASTED FROM 1897 TO APPROXIMATELY 1947.
..IN OTHER WORDS...
YES...
...JUST LIKE THAT GENTLEMAN THERE...
THAT ISN'T YOUR REAL BODY, IS IT?

PEOPLE CARRY SUCH A DEVICE IN ORDER TO TRAVEL FROM WORLD TO WORLD AND ACROSS THE DIMENSIONS.
YES, THERE ARE TIMES THAT EVEN WITHOUT THE AID OF SUCH DEVICE..
..BY SOME MIRACLE OF THE UNIVERSE, A CARELESS INDIVIDUAL MAY FALL INTO A DIMENSIONAL BREAK.
THIS MAN..
.. IN HIS BIRTH WORLD, WAS A STUDENT DRIVEN BY A LUST FOR KNOWLEDGE..
..BELIEVING IN HIS TALENTS, HIS WISH WAS SIMPLY TO EXCEL FOR HIS HOME, FOR HIS COUNTRY..
AND UNTIL THAT DAY AND THAT MOMENT, THIS WISH BURNED BRILLIANTLY WITHIN THE YOUNG MAN.
BEFORE YOU LADIES REST, SHOULD YOU SO DESIRE..
..I'D BE HAPPY TO TELL YOU A TALE FROM ONCE UPON A TIME.
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
IN THIS WORLD, THERE IS A THING CALLED THE COLLAPSER.

AFTER REGAINING CONSCIOUSNESS IN A FOREST HE HAD NEVER SEEN BEFORE..
..AFTER WANDERING FOR SO LONG..
..THE MAN CAME UPON WHAT SEEMED TO BE A WESTERN PALACE.
AND FROM THE DEPTHS OF THIS PALACE, THE YOUTH SAW THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FIGURE GAZING AT HIM
ONLY AFTER GAZING UPON THE VISAGE FOR A LONG TIME DID I REALIZE HIS GENDER.
NOT THAT THERE WAS ANYTHING ABOUT HIM THAT RESEMBLED A MAIDEN, BUT...
...THAT PERSON...
IT SOUNDS ALMOST LIKE WHAT HAPPENED TO ME.

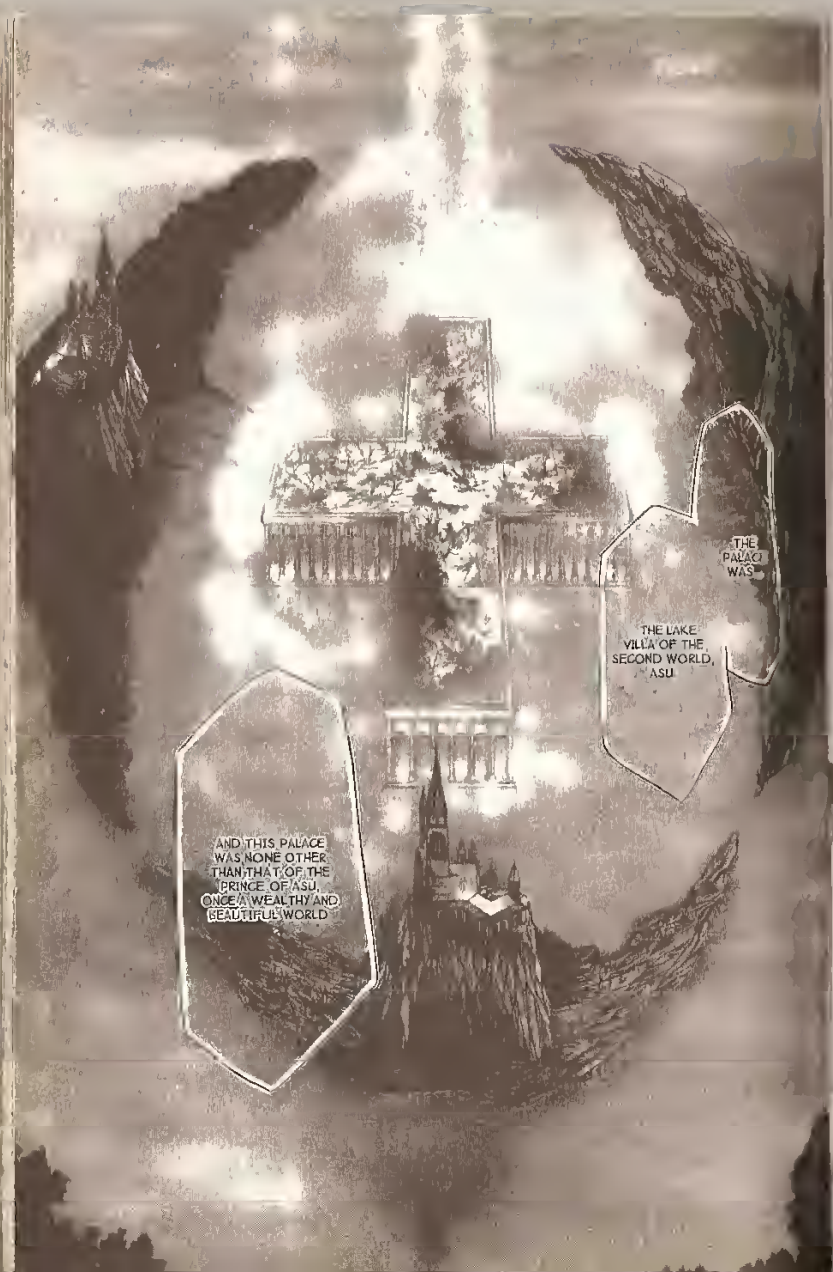
MORE IMPORTANTLY, HOW COULD I POSSIBLY END UP IN THIS PLACE?
WHAT IS THIS?
..I MEAN..
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
YOU'RE A FOREIGNER, RIGHT? DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?

HE HAD SUCH BRILLIANT RED HAIR THE LIKES OF WHICH I HAD NEVER SEEN BEFORE.
AND THIS AURA AROUND HIM SEEMED SOMEHOW INHUMAN.
SMUSH
?!
WHO...
..WHO ARE YOU?

..SEEU.

WHERE AM I?
GLIDE

SO THAT NO PERSON OR THING COULD COME INTO DIRECT CONTACT FROM OUTSIDE.
THE WHOLE PALACE WAS ENVELOPED BY A CLEAR, THIN VEIL.
I DISCOVERED SOMETHING ELSE.


THE PALACE WAS
THE LAKE VILLA OF THE SECOND WORLD, ASU.
AND THIS PALACE WAS NONE OTHER THAN THAT OF THE PRINCE OF ASU, ONCE A WEALTHY AND BEAUTIFUL WORLD.

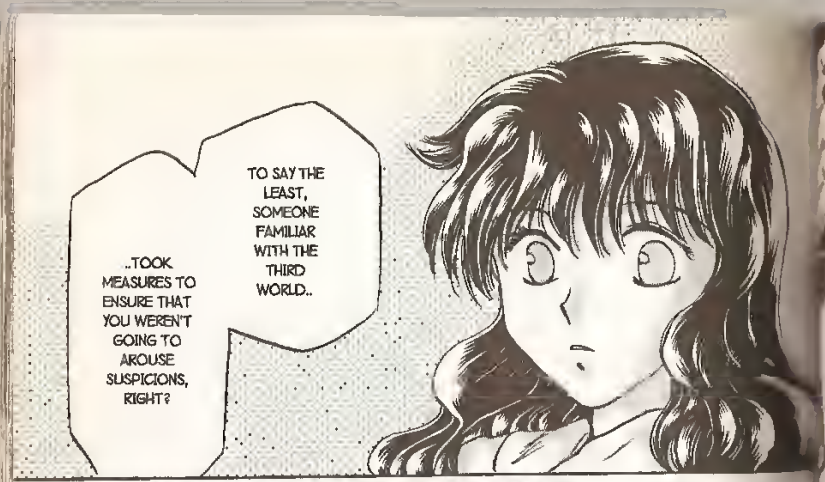
...IT WASN'T UNTIL LATER...
...THAT I FOUND OUT THAT WAS HIS NAME.

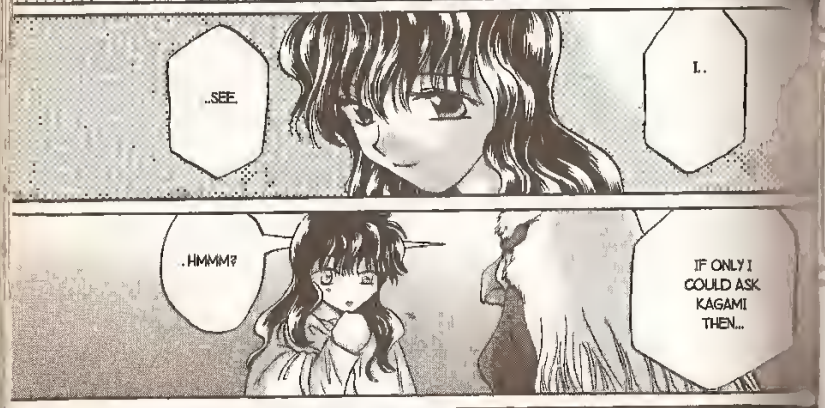
21

AND IT TOOK A WHILE FOR ME TO FINALLY REALIZE THAT THIS WAS A WORLD COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM MINE.
NOT LONG AFTER-WARDS, I WAS CAP-TURED BY THE PALACE GUARDS.
I HAD A HARD TIME, AS I DID NOT KNOW A WORD OF THEIR LANGUAGE.

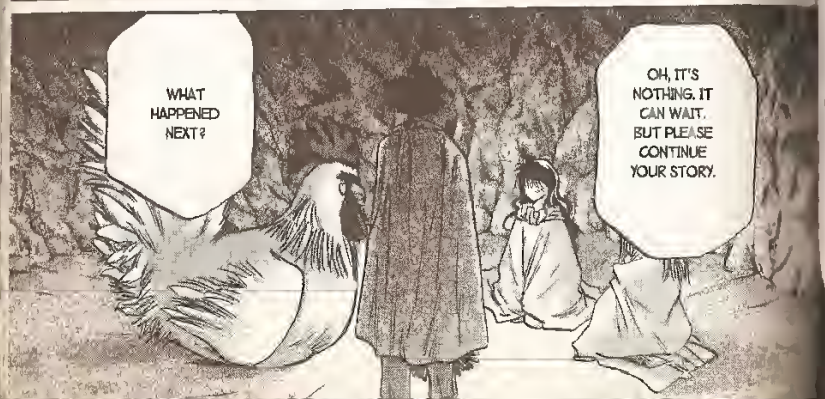
SO...

ALL OF A SUDDEN, I COULD READ THE ENGLISH DICTIONARY, THE SOLILOQUIES AND TECHNICAL PUBLICATIONS I HAD IN MY BAG...
AND WHAT SHE TOLD ME WAS TRUE.
THERE'S NO WAY THAT'S TRUE.
WAIT A SECOND, THAT'S A LIE!!
..IF I UNDERSTOOD THE THIRD WORLD'S LANGUAGE, WOULDN'T I BE ONE OF THOSE BILINGUALS OR SOMETHING?
AND COME TO THINK OF IT...
THAT'S RIGHT, FOUR YEARS OLD AND A...
'CAUSE ..
AND WHAT'S THE MATTER NOW?
..EVEN THOUGH I HAVE A CHIP TOO, I'VE STILL EARNED FAILING GRADES IN ENGLISH.
AHH
I'M SORRY...
..MY CHIP ISN'T PROGRAMMED WITH ANY INFORMATION FROM THE THIRD WORLD.
WHAT DID YOU DO TO MY HEAD?!
PRINCE SEEU ASKED THAT WE IMPLANT YOU WITH A CHIP
..THAT IS, A MACHINE THAT HELPS YOU UNDERSTAND LANGUAGES FOREIGN TO YOU.
BUT I BET I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO ASK ME.
MA...
..MACHINE...
USUALLY, YOU GET CHIPPED WHEN YOU'RE REALLY YOUNG, BUT YOU MIGHT EXPERIENCE SOME SIDE EFFECTS.
..DO YOU UNDER-STAND ME, YOU THIRD WORLDER?


TO SAY THE LEAST, SOMEONE FAMILIAR WITH THE THIRD WORLD..
..TOOK MEASURES TO ENSURE THAT YOU WEREN'T GOING TO AROUSE SUSPICIONS, RIGHT?

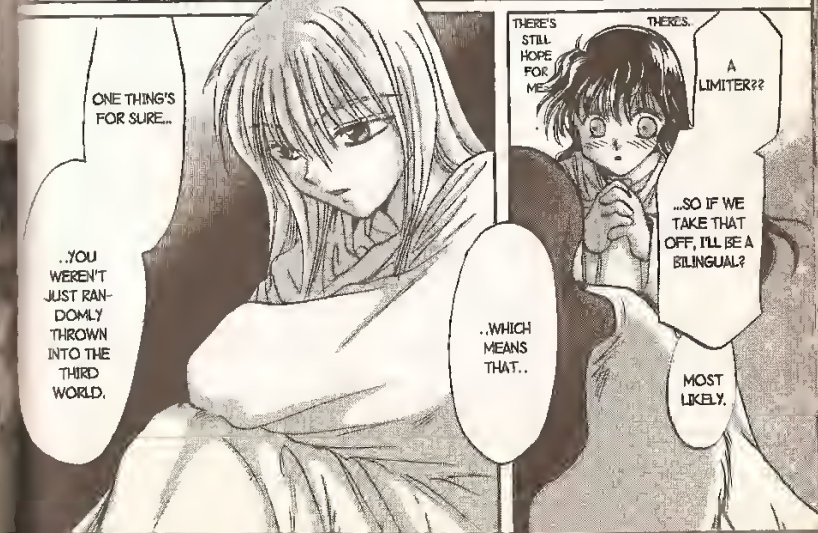

I..
..SEE.

IF ONLY I COULD ASK KAGAMI THEN..
..HMMM?


OH, IT'S NOTHING. IT CAN WAIT. BUT PLEASE CONTINUE YOUR STORY.
WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

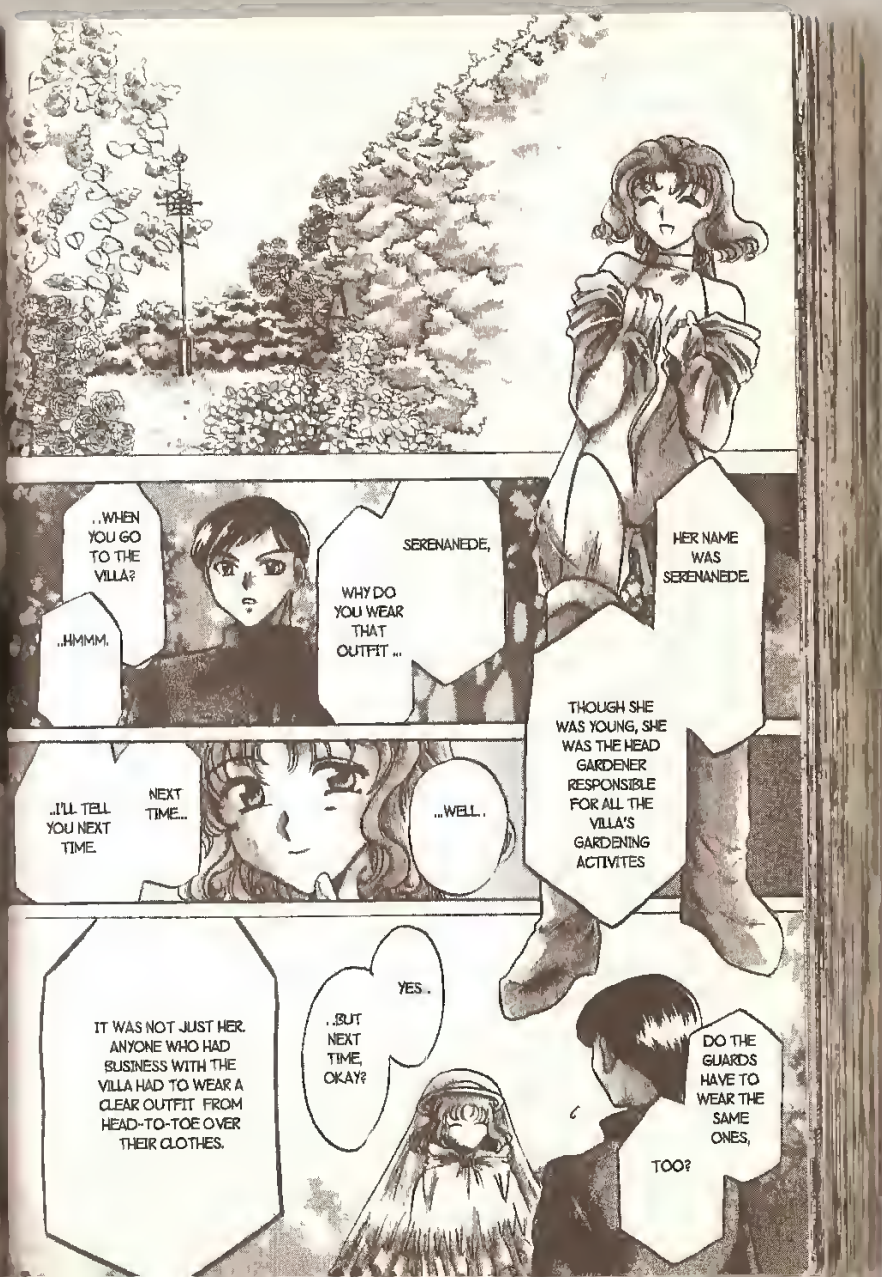
...PRODIGY.
I WONDER WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF I...
..HAD BEEN..

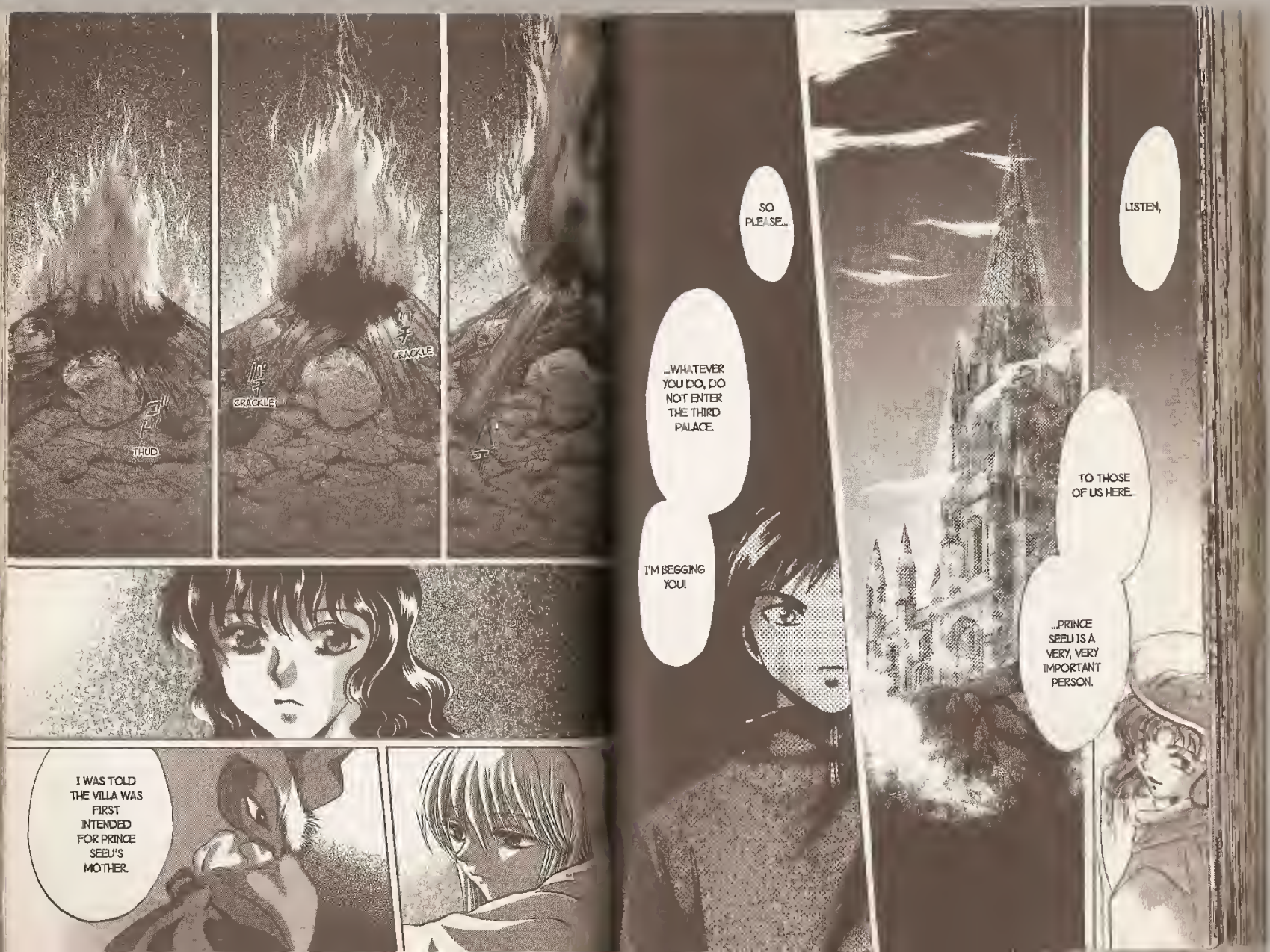
..UM..
...THE WORLD'S BIGGEST SENSATION?
I GUESS THAT'S TOO MUCH.
UNLIKE ME, YOU WERE BORN HERE AND RAISED THERE.
YOU MIGHT WANT TO GET YOUR CHIP CHECKED WHEN YOU HAVE TIME. THERE MIGHT BE A LIMITER ON IT


A LIMITER??
THERE'S STILL HOPE FOR ME.
THERE.
...SO IF WE TAKE THAT OFF, I'LL BE A BILINGUAL?
MOST LIKELY.
..WHICH MEANS THAT..
ONE THING'S FOR SURE...
..YOU WEREN'T JUST RANDOMLY THROWN INTO THE THIRD WORLD.

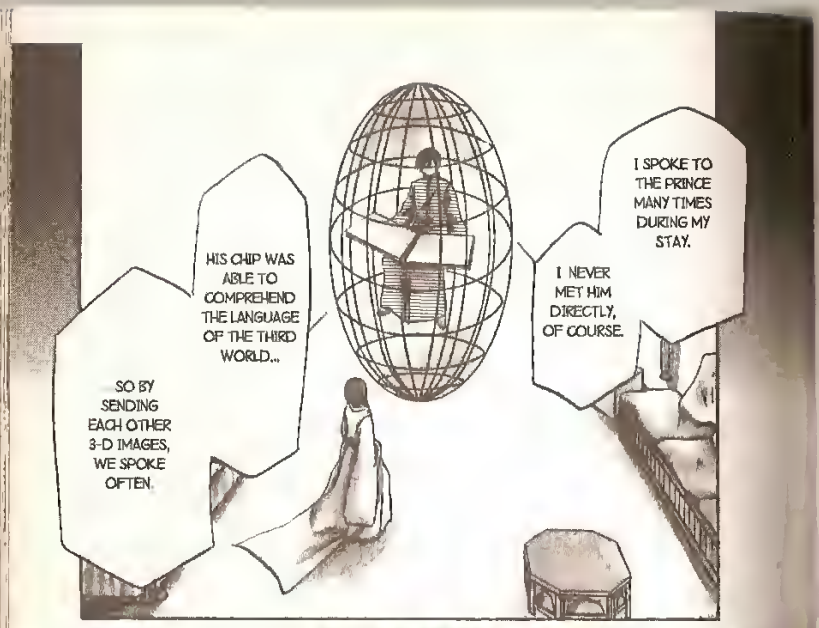
IT SOUNDS ALMOST LIKE...
...WHAT HAPPENED TO ME.
GAZE
THE SECOND WORLDERS I MET...
...WE'RE ALL GOOD PEOPLE WHO LIKED TO LAUGH.
~WITH ONE EXCEPTION~!
...SEEU, OF COURSE.
YOU BROUGHT THE LAUNDRY IN WHILE I WAS OUT.
BEAM
OH!
THANK YOU SO MUCH..
AND YOU'VE GOTTEN SO MUCH BETTER AT SPEAKING OUR LANGUAGE!!!
OF COURSE...
...OUTSIDE RAIN.
THIS...
...MINE.
...LISTEN, I NEED TO TALK...
...SERENANEDE, LISTEN LITTLE...
..NO..
CLAP CLAP
YOU'RE JUST SO SMART AND SUCH A HARD WORKER, AREN'T YOU?

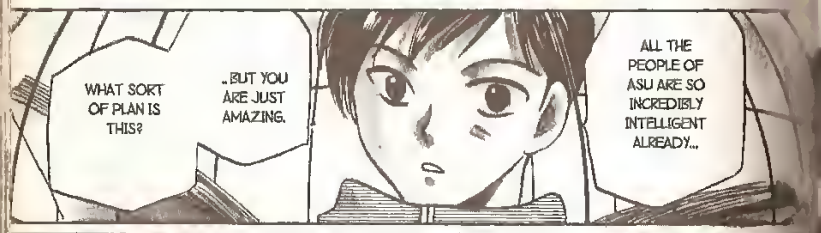
EVEN WITH ALL THE PRECAUTIONS, I NEVER ONCE SAW ANYONE ENTER.
NOT ONLY THAT...
THERE WAS A BIG VEIL COVERING PRINCE SEEU'S THIRD PALACE.
..I WONDER WHY THAT IS...
..ENTERING THE VICINITY OF THE THIRD PALACE.
AND I WAS STERNLY AND REPEATEDLY WARNED AGAINST EVER..
THAT PERSON.
COULD IT BE ...A QUARANTINE?
COULD HE BE CARRYING A HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS DISEASE?


HER NAME WAS SERENANEDE.
THOUGH SHE WAS YOUNG, SHE WAS THE HEAD GARDENER RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THE VILLA'S GARDENING ACTIVITES
SERENANEDE, WHY DO YOU WEAR THAT OUTFIT ..
..WHEN YOU GO TO THE VILLA?
..HMMM.
..WELL.
..I'LL TELL YOU NEXT TIME.
NEXT TIME...
IT WAS NOT JUST HER. ANYONE WHO HAD BUSINESS WITH THE VILLA HAD TO WEAR A CLEAR OUTFIT FROM HEAD-TO-TOE OVER THEIR CLOTHES.
YES.
..BUT NEXT TIME, OKAY?
DO THE GUARDS HAVE TO WEAR THE SAME ONES, TOO?


THUD
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
I WAS TOLD THE VILLA WAS FIRST INTENDED FOR PRINCE SEEU'S MOTHER.
I'M BEGGING YOU!
...WHATEVER YOU DO, DO NOT ENTER THE THIRD PALACE.
SO PLEASE...
LISTEN,
TO THOSE OF US HERE.
...PRINCE SEEU IS A VERY, VERY IMPORTANT PERSON.

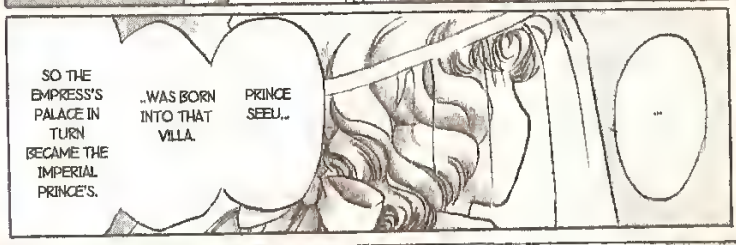
PRINCE SEEU'S MOTHER WAS BEAUTIFUL AND INTELLIGENT,
AND HER BLOOD WAS OF THE HIGHEST NOBILITY, HOWEVER..
...HER BODY WAS EXTREMELY WEAK.
AND SO THE LORD EMPEROR PREPARED A SPECIAL ROOM FOR HER TO ISOLATE HER FROM THE OUTSIDE AIR
ALL HER NEEDS WERE TAKEN CARE OF BY DOLLS...
...AND EVEN THE LORD EMPEROR HIMSELF, BEFORE DIRECTLY MEETING WITH HER, HAD TO TAKE THE UTMOST PRECAUTIONS AND CLEANSE HIS BODY MANY TIMES TO KEEP OUTSIDE GERMS AWAY FROM HER.
...WE WERE ALL SO VERY WORRIED AND SAD THAT OUR EMPRESS HAD TO LIVE WITHIN THAT LITTLE ROOM
AT THAT TIME..
..NOW I KNOW THAT WAS THE GREATEST FORTUNE ONE COULD EVER HAVE.
BUT NOW..
OUR LADY EMPRESS PASSED AWAY FROM THE STRESS OF GIVING BIRTH TO PRINCE SEEU.
IT'S NOTHING.
?
...IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING OF ALL.
...TAKE.
AND SO FOR THOSE OF THE VILLA, HER FINAL GIFT, PRINCE SEEU...
SHE WAS SO VERY KIND AND STRONG.

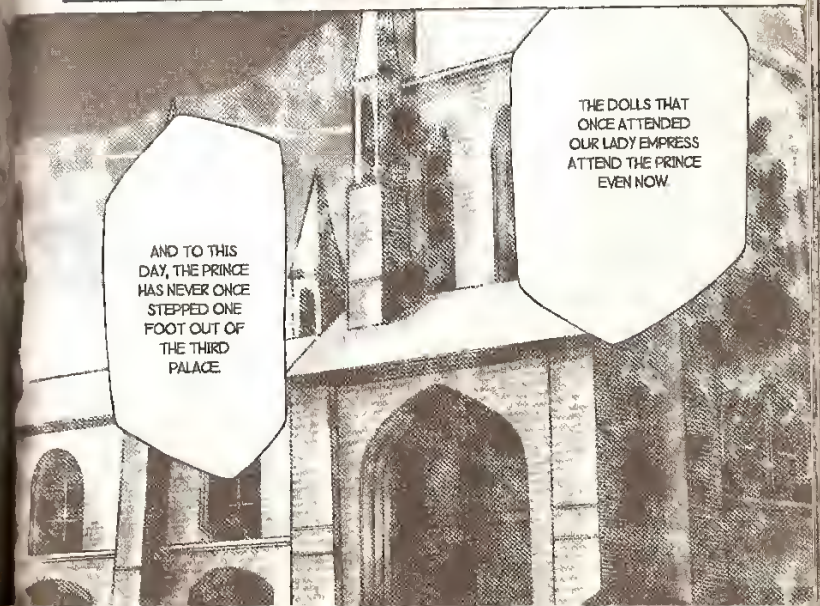

I SPOKE TO THE PRINCE MANY TIMES DURING MY STAY.
I NEVER MET HIM DIRECTLY, OF COURSE.
HIS CHIP WAS ABLE TO COMPREHEND THE LANGUAGE OF THE THIRD WORLD...
SO BY SENDING EACH OTHER 3-D IMAGES, WE SPOKE OFTEN.


ALL THE PEOPLE OF ASU ARE SO INCREDIBLY INTELLIGENT ALREADY...
..BUT YOU ARE JUST AMAZING.
WHAT SORT OF PLAN IS THIS?

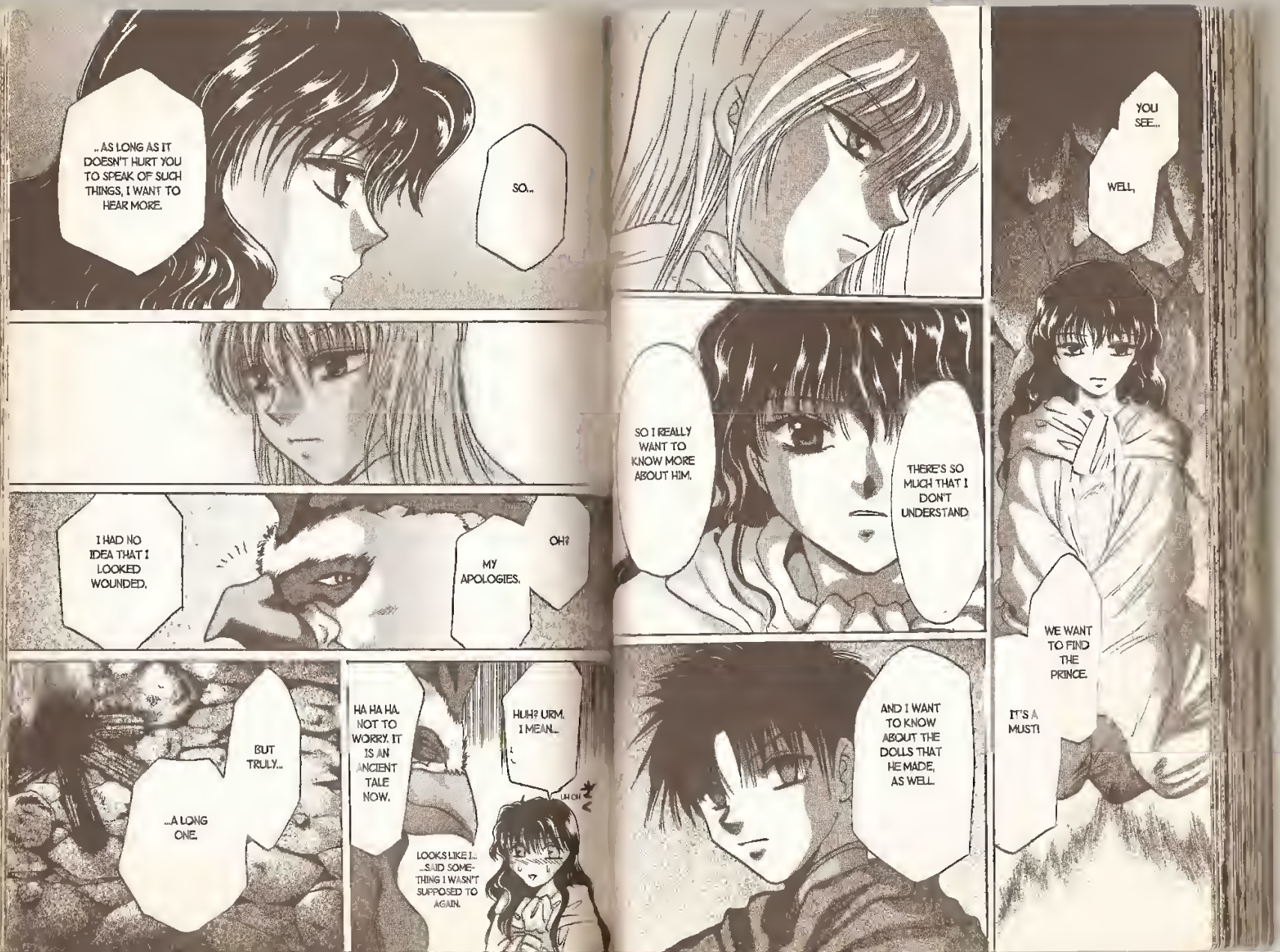
I WILL TRANSFER A PERSON'S SOUL INTO IT.
.BUT FOR SIMPLE BLUEPRINTS, THESE ARE...
I SEE.
IT'S A PLAN FOR A NEW TYPE OF DOLL.

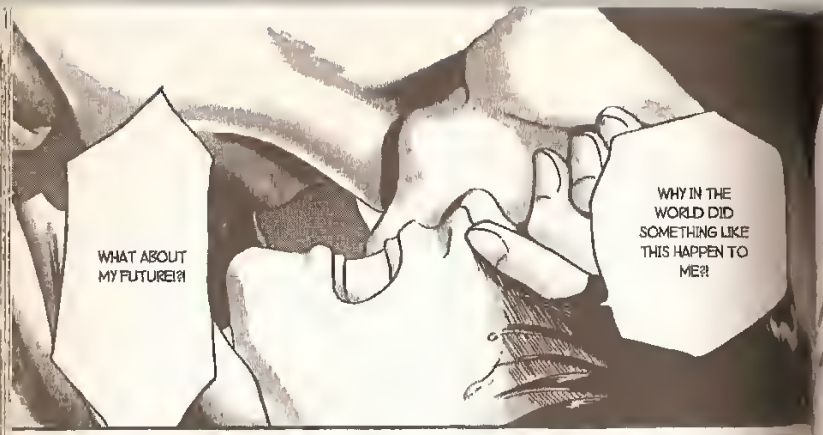
SO,
IS PRINCE SEEU JUST LIKE THEM?
IS THAT WHY HE CAN ONLY LIVE BEHIND THAT THIN VEIL?

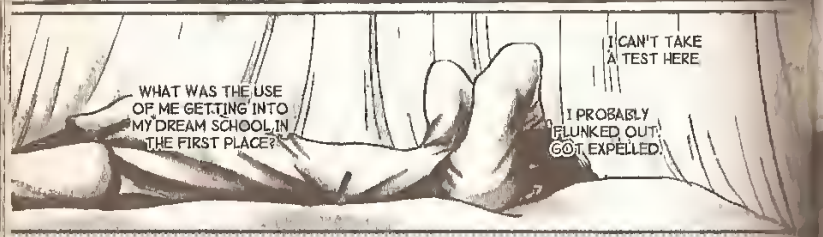

...
PRINCE SEEU...
..WAS BORN INTO THAT VILLA.
SO THE EMPRESS'S PALACE IN TURN BECAME THE IMPERIAL PRINCE'S.

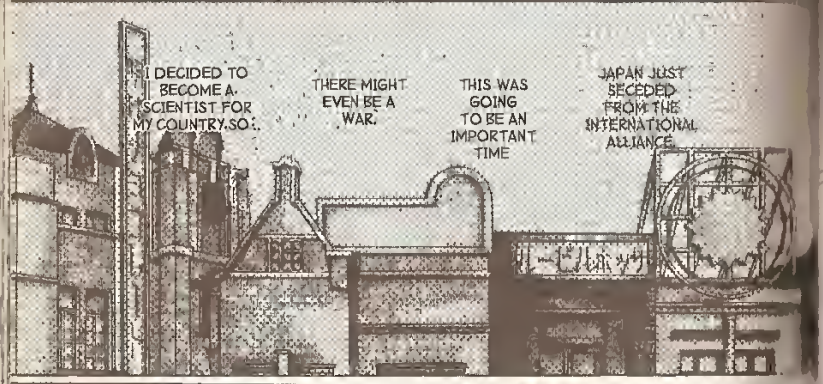

THE DOLLS THAT ONCE ATTENDED OUR LADY EMPRESS ATTEND THE PRINCE EVEN NOW.
AND TO THIS DAY, THE PRINCE HAS NEVER ONCE STEPPED ONE FOOT OUT OF THE THIRD PALACE.

SERENANEDE TOLD ME THAT YOU'RE EXCEPTIONAL.
...AND SHE'S RIGHT. I THUS APPOINT YOU TO ASSIST ME IN THIS ENDEAVOR.
FOR SOME TIME NOW,
I'VE BEEN CORRESPONDING WITH THE SCIENTISTS OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE OVER RESEARCH.
I HAVE..
?!
I WANT TO TAKE THE SOUL OUT OF A LIVING BODY, TO TAKE THE TRUE ESSENCE OF A HUMAN BEING,
AND PLACE THE SOUL INTO A DOLL, SO THAT THE PERSON MAY LIVE AGAIN WITHOUT FEAR OF AGE OR DECAY.
ITS COMPLE-TION IS ESSENTIAL.
IT'S BECOME A LONG STORY, RIGHT?
I CAN STOP NOW IF YOU'RE TIRED.
NO, PLEASE..
...IT'S A LITTLE HARD, BUT IF I MAY LISTEN, I'D LIKE TO.

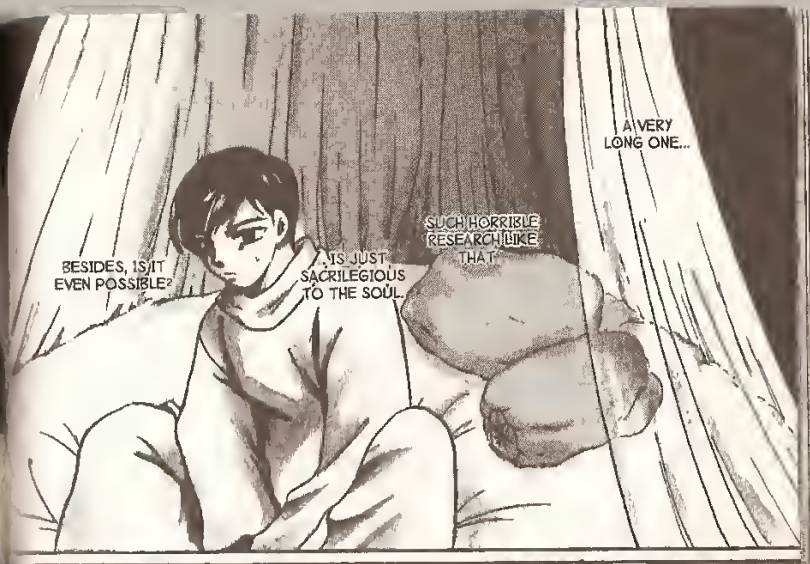

.. AS LONG AS IT DOESN'T HURT YOU TO SPEAK OF SUCH THINGS, I WANT TO HEAR MORE.
SO..
I HAD NO IDEA THAT I LOOKED WOUNDED.
OH?
MY APOLOGIES.
BUT TRULY...
...A LONG ONE.
HA HA HA. NOT TO WORRY. IT IS AN ANCIENT TALE NOW.
HUH? URM. I MEAN..
UH OH
LOOKS LIKE I... ...SAID SOMETHING I WASN'T SUPPOSED TO AGAIN.
SO I REALLY WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT HIM.
THERE'S SO MUCH THAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND
AND I WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE DOLLS THAT HE MADE, AS WELL.
YOU SEE...
WELL,
WE WANT TO FIND THE PRINCE.
IT'S A MUST!


WHAT ABOUT MY FUTURE!?!
WHY IN THE WORLD DID SOMETHING LIKE THIS HAPPEN TO ME?!

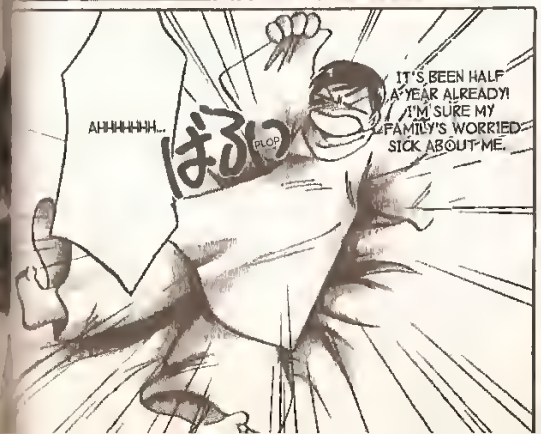

WHAT WAS THE USE OF ME GETTING INTO MY DREAM SCHOOL IN THE FIRST PLACE?
I PROBABLY FLUNKED OUT/GOT EXPELLED.
I CAN'T TAKE A TEST HERE

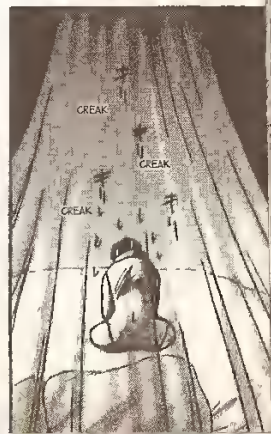

I DECIDED TO BECOME A SCIENTIST FOR MY COUNTRY.SO...
THERE MIGHT EVEN BE A WAR.
THIS WAS GOING TO BE AN IMPORTANT TIME
JAPAN JUST SECEDED FROM THE INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE.

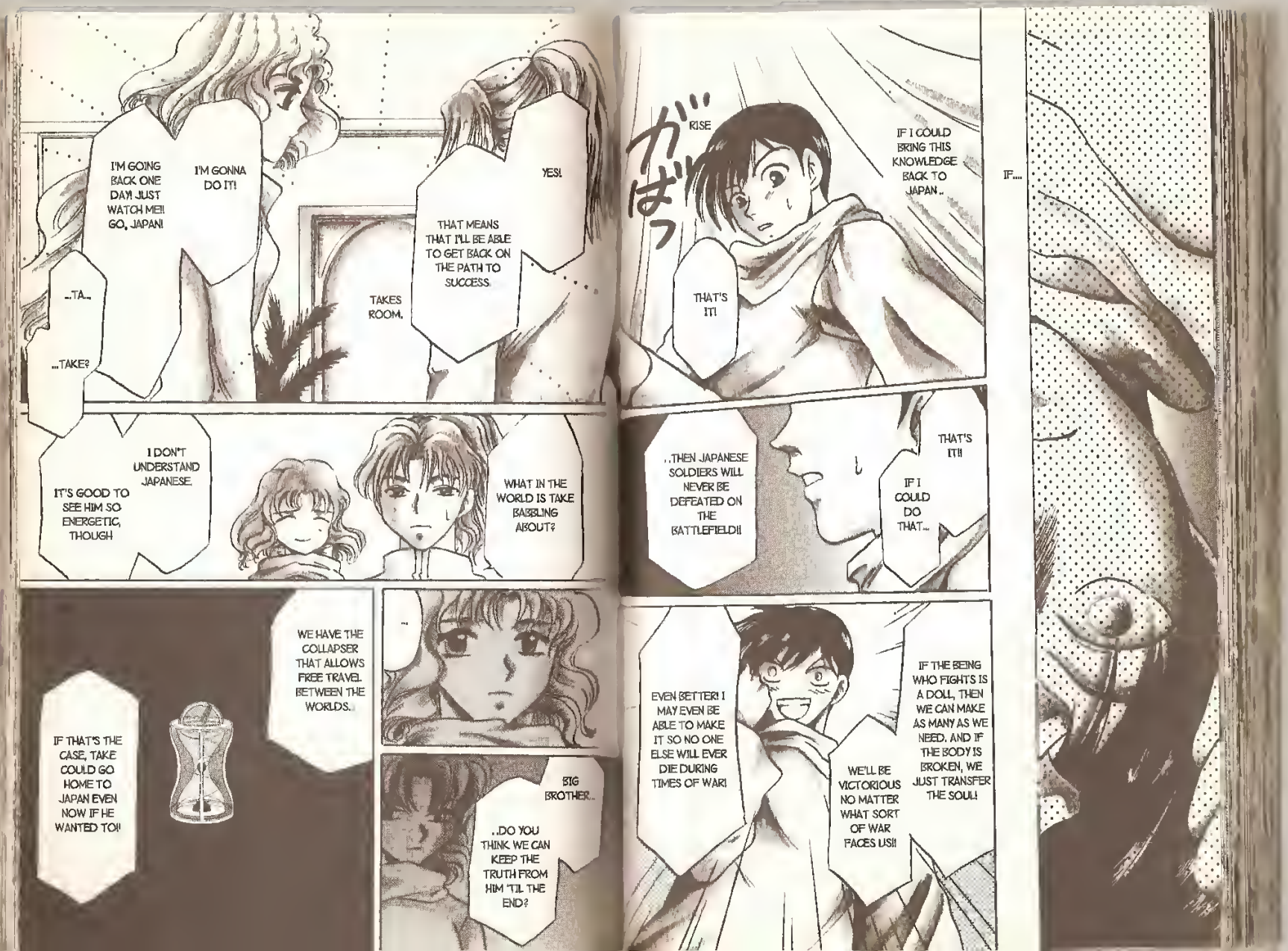
WAR.


BESIDES, IS IT EVEN POSSIBLE?
IS JUST SACRILEGIOUS TO THE SOUL.
SUCH HORRIBLE RESEARCH LIKE THAT
A VERY LONG ONE...

THIS ISN'T THE WORLD THAT I KNOW
BUT TO THINK OF WHAT CAN AND CANNOT BE DONE LOSES ITS EFFECT IN THIS WORLD


AHHHHHH...
はふっ
PLOP
IT'S BEEN HALF A YEAR ALREADY! I'M SURE MY FAMILY'S WORRIED SICK ABOUT ME.


CREAK
CREAK
CREAK


I'M GOING BACK ONE DAY! JUST WATCH ME!! GO, JAPAN!
I'M GONNA DO IT!
YES!
THAT MEANS THAT I'LL BE ABLE TO GET BACK ON THE PATH TO SUCCESS.
..TA..
...TAKE?
TAKES ROOM.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE HIM SO ENERGETIC, THOUGH
I DON'T UNDERSTAND JAPANESE.
WHAT IN THE WORLD IS TAKE BABBLING ABOUT?
IF THAT'S THE CASE, TAKE COULD GO HOME TO JAPAN EVEN NOW IF HE WANTED TO!!
WE HAVE THE COLLAPSER THAT ALLOWS FREE TRAVEL BETWEEN THE WORLDS..
..
BIG BROTHER..
..DO YOU THINK WE CAN KEEP THE TRUTH FROM HIM 'TIL THE END?
RISE
がばっ
IF I COULD BRING THIS KNOWLEDGE BACK TO JAPAN..
THAT'S IT!
..THEN JAPANESE SOLDIERS WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED ON THE BATTLEFIELD!!
THAT'S IT!!
IF I COULD DO THAT..
IF....
EVEN BETTER! I MAY EVEN BE ABLE TO MAKE IT SO NO ONE ELSE WILL EVER DIE DURING TIMES OF WAR!
WE'LL BE VICTORIOUS NO MATTER WHAT SORT OF WAR FACES US!!
IF THE BEING WHO FIGHTS IS A DOLL, THEN WE CAN MAKE AS MANY AS WE NEED. AND IF THE BODY IS BROKEN, WE JUST TRANSFER THE SOUL!

AND SO...

WITHOUT EVEN KNOWING THE TRUTH

I DECIDED TO TAKE PART IN A MAD EXPERIMENT...

TO TRANSFER THE HUMAN SOUL INTO A DOLL

WHY DID HE HAVE TO FALL INTO OUR WORLD NOW?

WHY NOW?

POOR TAKE...

WE'LL CONTINUE TO TELL TAKE THAT THE COLLAPSER CAN'T RETURN HIM TO THE THIRD WORLD.

LET US BELIEVE THAT IT'S THE BEST PLAN OF ACTION FOR US.

WE CAN HIDE THE TRUTH FROM HIM.

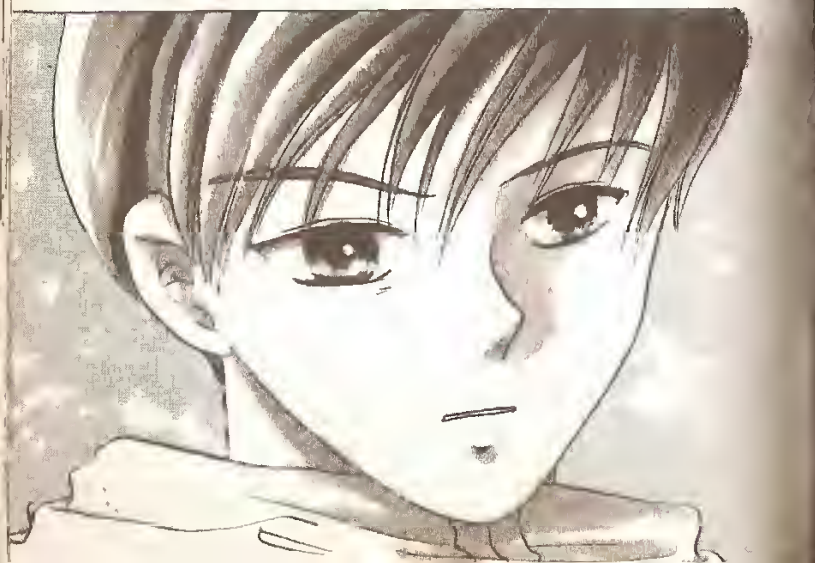
WE'LL LET HIM BELIEVE THAT ONE DAY HE WILL BE ABLE TO RETURN HOME.

IT IS FAR BETTER NOT KNOWING THE TRUTH THAN TO KNOW A TRUTH THAT'LL ONLY LEAD TO MISERY.

THIS WILL ALLOW TAKE TO BE HAPPY WITH HIS LIFE HERE.

IT'S NOT THAT... BUT... IT'S..
BUT I DIDN'T HAVE THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY THEN, SO THE SIZE WAS A LITTLE OFF.
...HA HA HA..
BECAUSE WE COULDN'T EXPERIMENT WITH HUMANS QUITE YET.
I THOUGHT I WOULD MAKE A CHICKEN FIRST.
AH HA HA..
...HA HA HA HA!
HA HA...
HA HA...
..OH OH.
MY..
..APOLOGIES.
I...
..HA HA...
..HAHAHAHAHA
I CREATED THIS PROTOTYPE OF MYSELF A LONG TIME AGO.
...FUNNY TO YOU?
...IS IT...

THANK YOU.

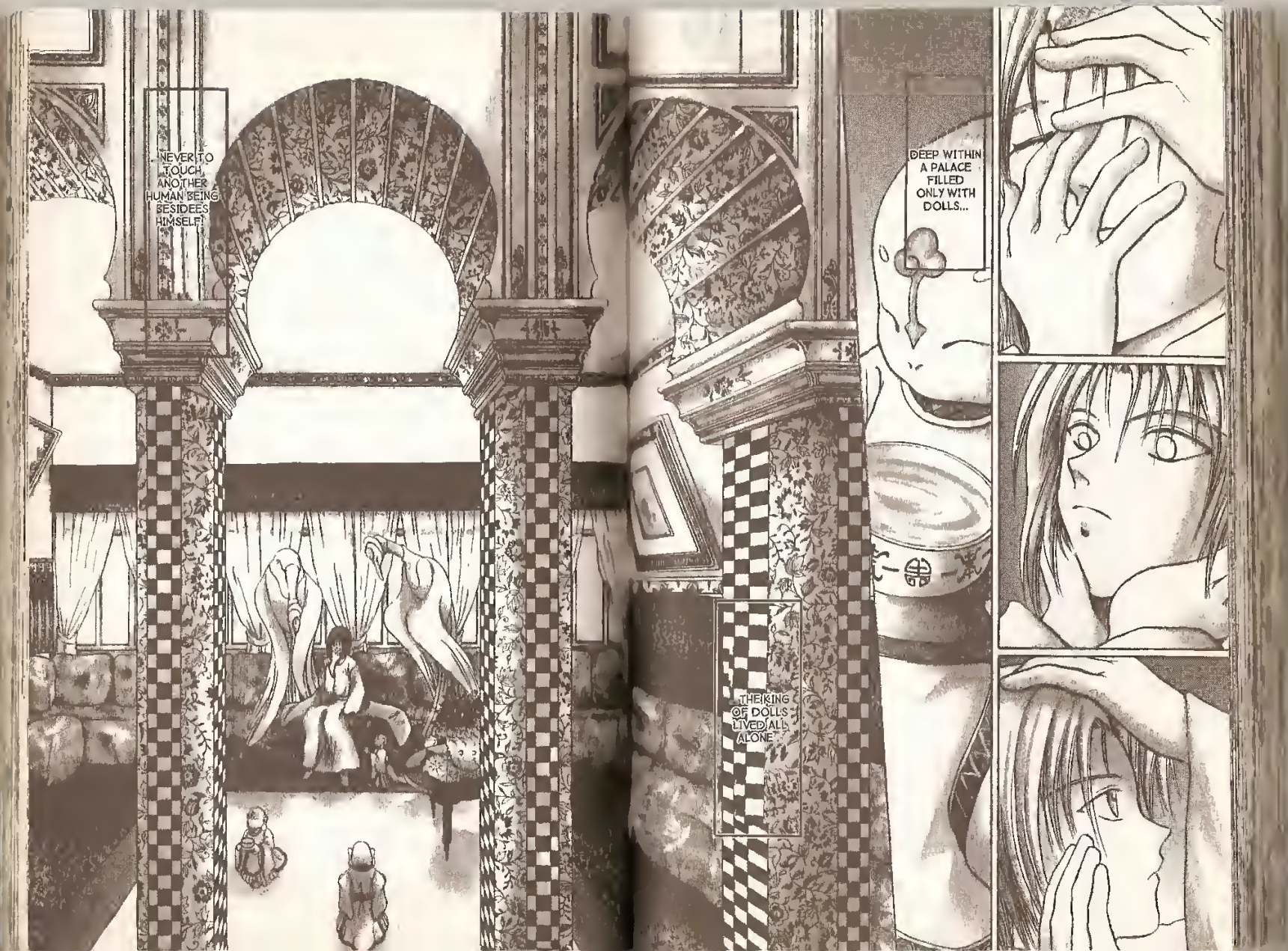


SO IT'S FUNNY, IS IT?
I SEE.

...WHEN I WAS MAKING IT, I THOUGHT THAT I FELT SOME-THING ELSE TOO.
WHEN I...

SO THAT WAS FUNNY?

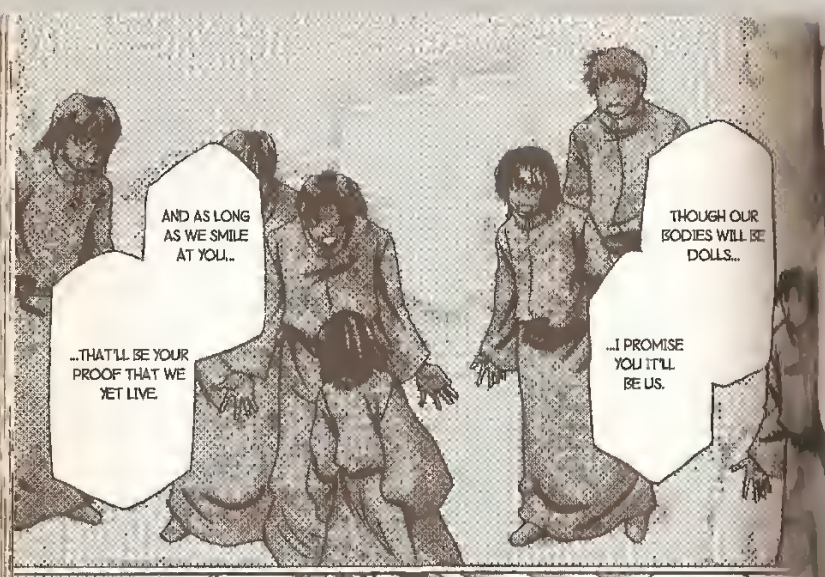
A DOLL'S HAIR COLOR...A DOLL'S CALMNESS.
THE PRINCE TRULY WAS A STRANGE PERSON.

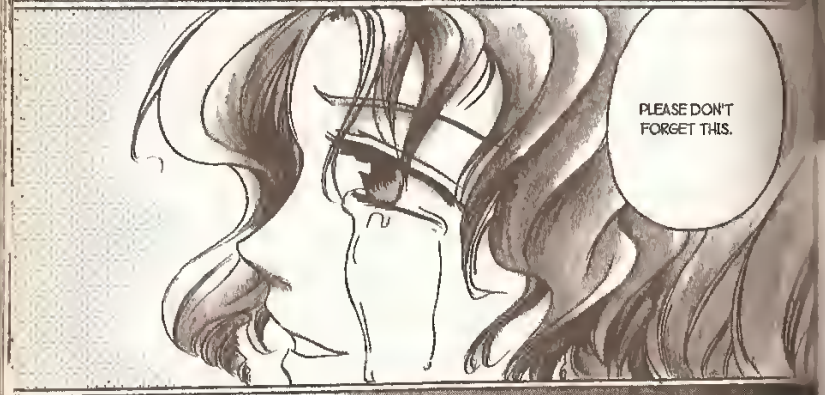

NEVER TO TOUCH, ANOTHER HUMAN BEING BESIDES HIMSELF!
THE KING OF DOLLS LIVED ALL ALONE
DEEP WITHIN A PALACE FILLED ONLY WITH DOLLS...

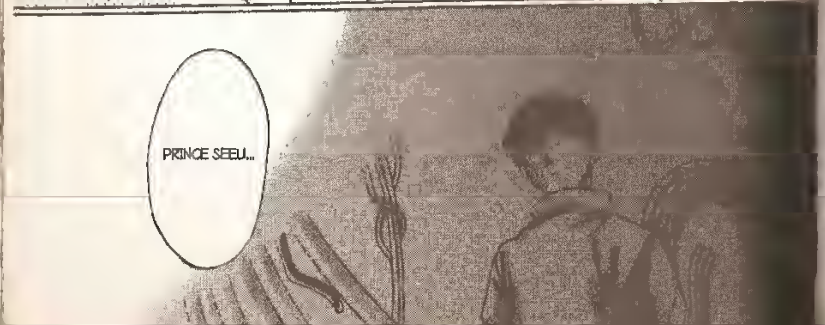
BUT THE MOLD? SERENANEDE!
IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE TRANSFERRING THE SOULS RIGHT NOW, ARE WE? WE'RE JUST CREATING A MOLD FOR THE DOLLS.
AREN'T YOU HAPPY WITH ME AS A TEST MODEL?
BUT WHY NOT, TAKE?
BLUSH
IT'S EVEN WORSE TO MAKE A MOLD OUT OF A CLOSE GIRLFRIEND, DARNIT!
IT'S BETTER TO USE SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU, DON'T YOU THINK?
GAHHHH!
OH, SCARY!
THAT'S WHY I'M SAYING NO, NO, NO!
SEE, PRINCE SEEU DOESN'T SEEM TO MIND.
YOU'RE JUST THINKING TDO MUCH, TAKE.
OH, TAKE, YOU DIRTY MAN
JUST THINK ABOUT IT! US, POKING AND PRODDING AND EXAMINING THIS...THIS THING THAT'S SHAPED LIKE YOU.
THE PRINCE'S DESIRE WAS TO SUCCESSFULLY TRANSFER A HUMAN SOUL INTO THE BODY OF A DOLL
WHATEVER YOU DO, YOU JUST CAN'T DO THAT!
YOUR HIGHNESS!
YOU CAN'T DO THAT!

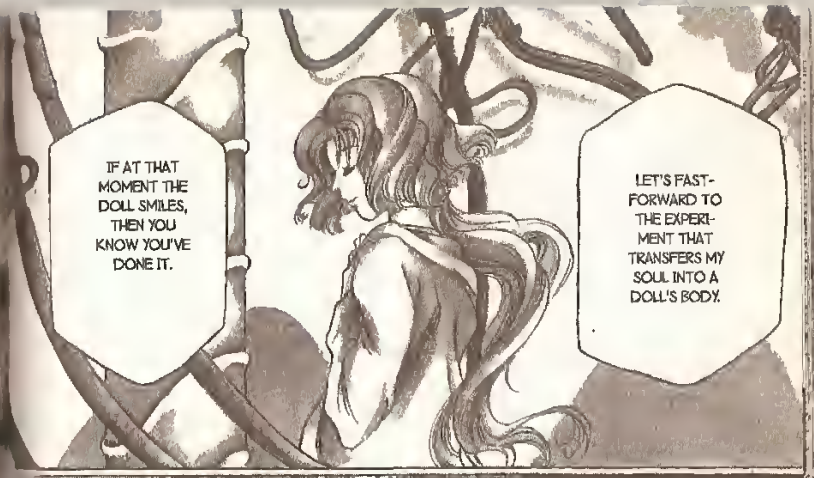
BECAUSE I AM ALIVE RIGHT NOW, MY PRINCE, THAT IS WHY.
AND PLEASE DON'T FORGET THAT...
SERENANEDE IS A LIVING BEING WHO LOVES TO LAUGH.
BECAUSE I AM ALIVE.

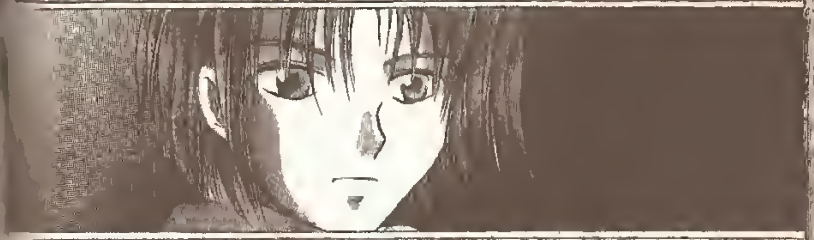
WHY IS TAKE BLUSHING SO MUCH?
HAS THERE BEEN SOME SORT OF PROBLEM?
...FU
WHY?
WHY DO YOU LAUGH?
...UNFAMILIAR WITH THE WORKINGS OF THE HUMAN HEART.
THE PRINCE WAS CLEARLY...
AH HA HA HA HA!
SERENANEDE! PRINCE SEEJI

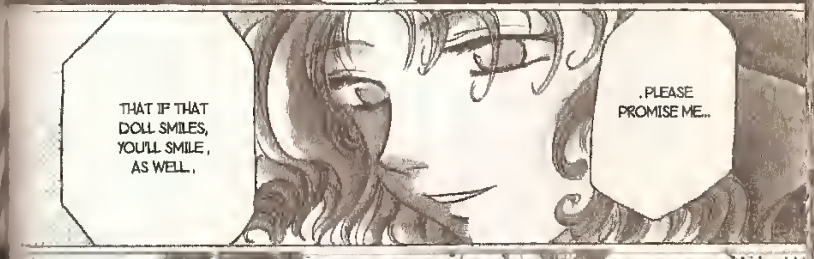

AND AS LONG AS WE SMILE AT YOU..
...THAT'LL BE YOUR PROOF THAT WE YET LIVE.
THOUGH OUR BODIES WILL BE DOLLS...
...I PROMISE YOU IT'LL BE US.


PLEASE DON'T FORGET THIS.

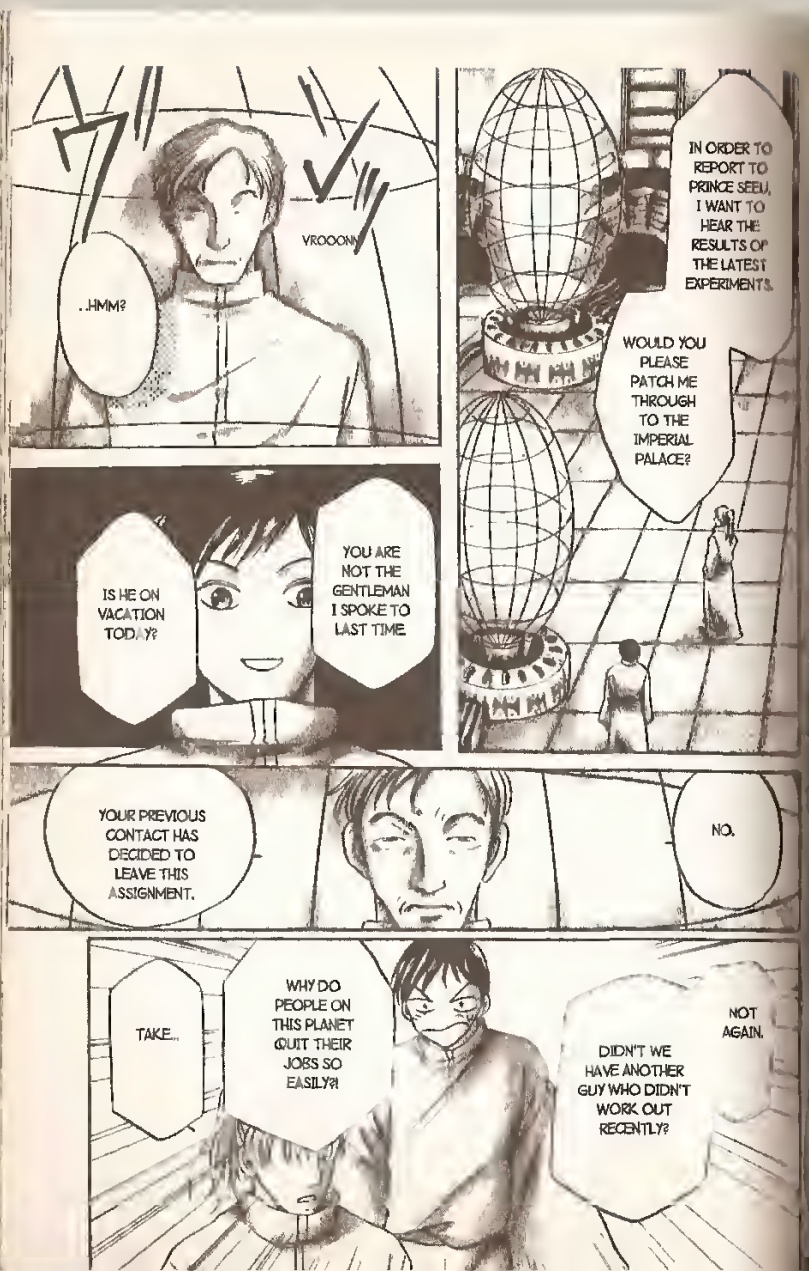

PRINCE SEEU...

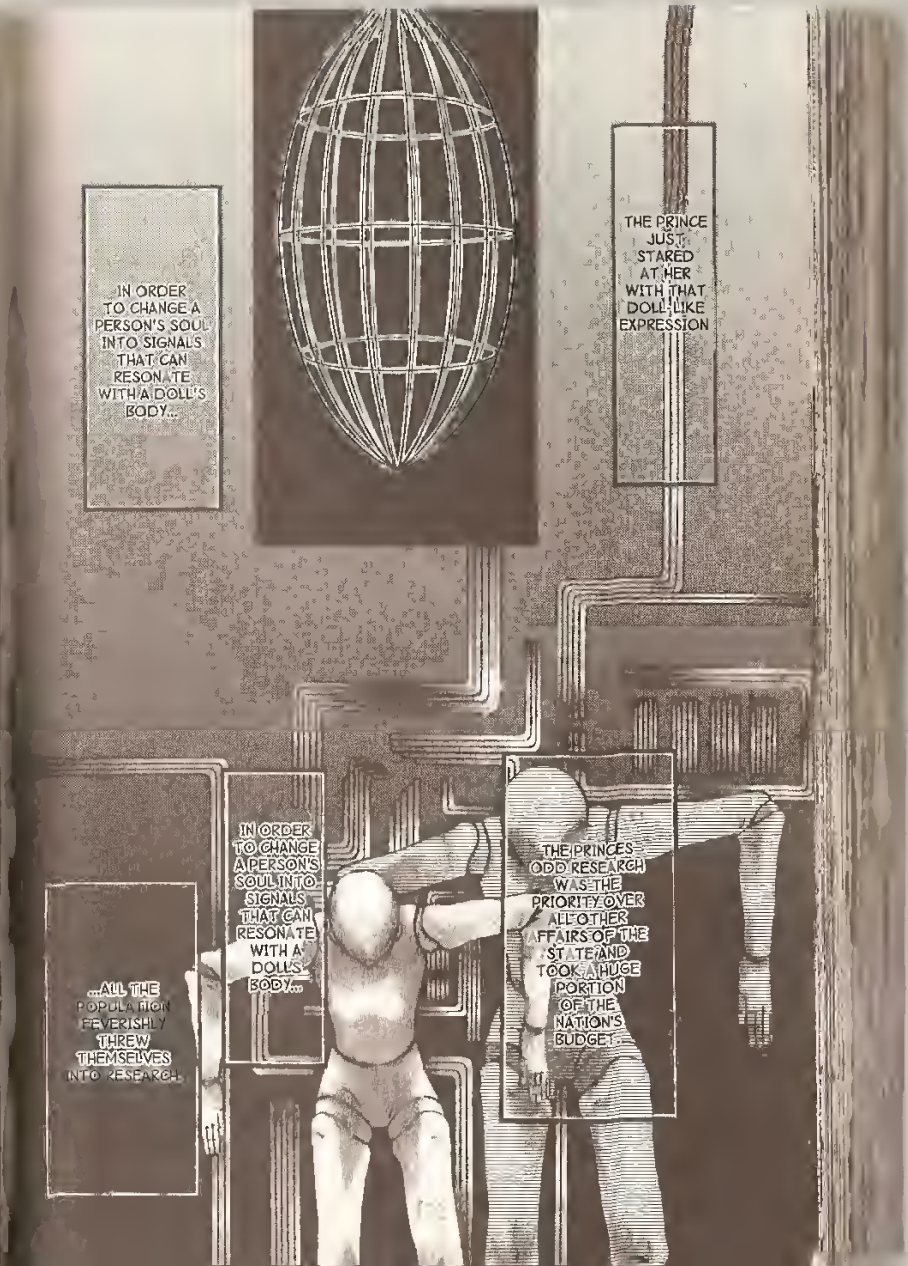

IF AT THAT MOMENT THE DOLL SMILES, THEN YOU KNOW YOU'VE DONE IT.
LET'S FAST-FORWARD TO THE EXPERI-MENT THAT TRANSFERS MY SOUL INTO A DOLL'S BODY.



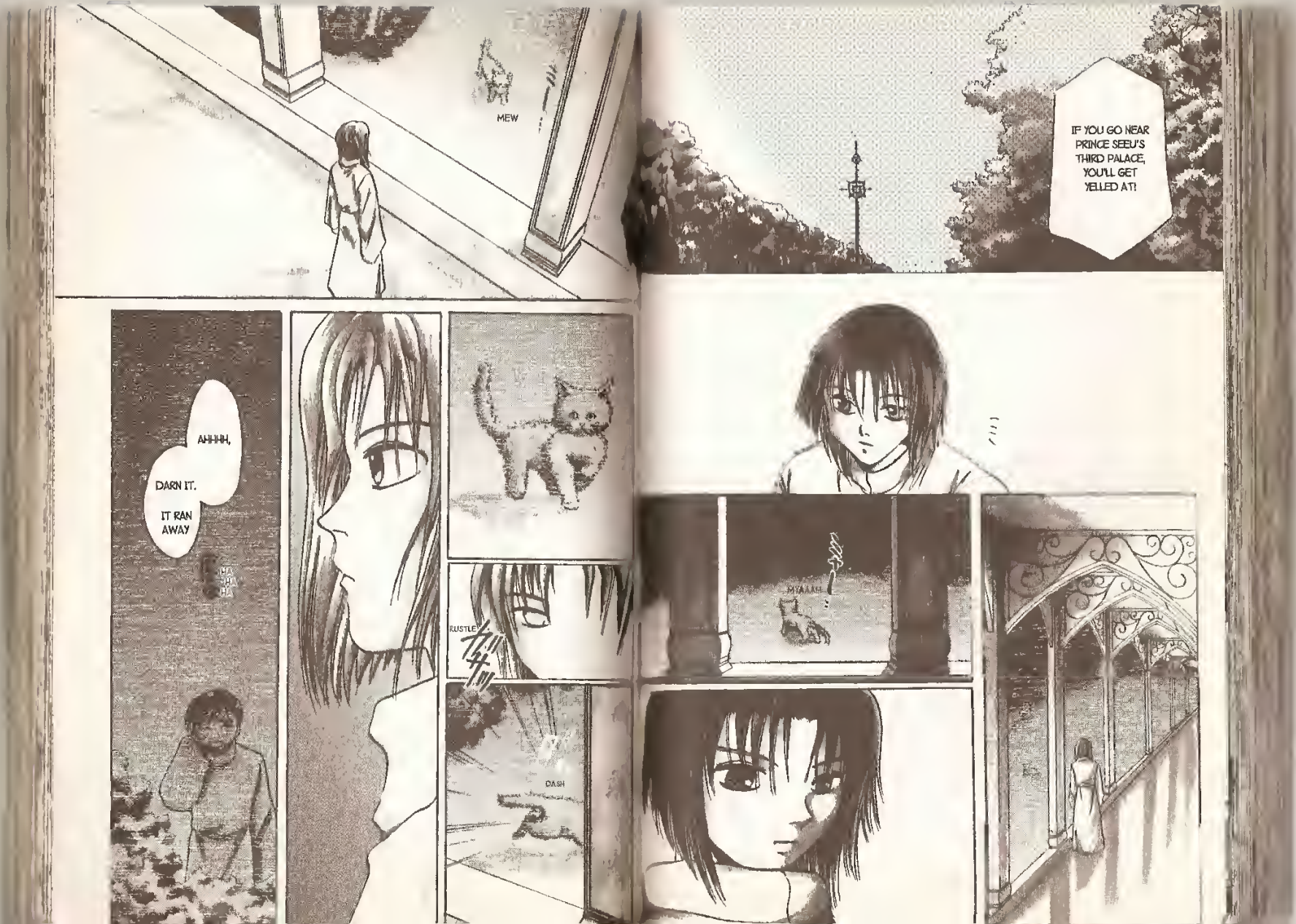

THAT IF THAT DOLL SMILES, YOU'LL SMILE, AS WELL.
.PLEASE PROMISE ME...

...AND EVERYONE IN THE PALACE.
AS WILL MY BROTHER...
...BECAUSE EVEN THOUGH I KNOW I SHOULDN'T, I'LL DEFINITELY HUG YOU.


...HMM?
VROOOM
IN ORDER TO REPORT TO PRINCE SEEU, I WANT TO HEAR THE RESULTS OF THE LATEST EXPERIMENTS.
WOULD YOU PLEASE PATCH ME THROUGH TO THE IMPERIAL PALACE?
IS HE ON VACATION TODAY?
YOU ARE NOT THE GENTLEMAN I SPOKE TO LAST TIME.
YOUR PREVIOUS CONTACT HAS DECIDED TO LEAVE THIS ASSIGNMENT.
NO.
TAKE...
WHY DO PEOPLE ON THIS PLANET QUIT THEIR JOBS SO EASILY?!
DIDN'T WE HAVE ANOTHER GUY WHO DIDN'T WORK OUT RECENTLY?
NOT AGAIN.


IN ORDER TO CHANGE A PERSON'S SOUL INTO SIGNALS THAT CAN RESONATE WITH A DOLL'S BODY...
THE PRINCE JUST STARED AT HER WITH THAT DOLL-LIKE EXPRESSION
...ALL THE POPULATION FEVERISHLY THREW THEMSELVES INTO RESEARCH.
IN ORDER TO CHANGE A PERSON'S SOUL INTO SIGNALS THAT CAN RESONATE WITH A DOLL'S BODY...
THE PRINCE'S ODD RESEARCH WAS THE PRIORITY OVER ALL OTHER AFFAIRS OF THE STATE AND TOOK A HUGE PORTION OF THE NATION'S BUDGET.

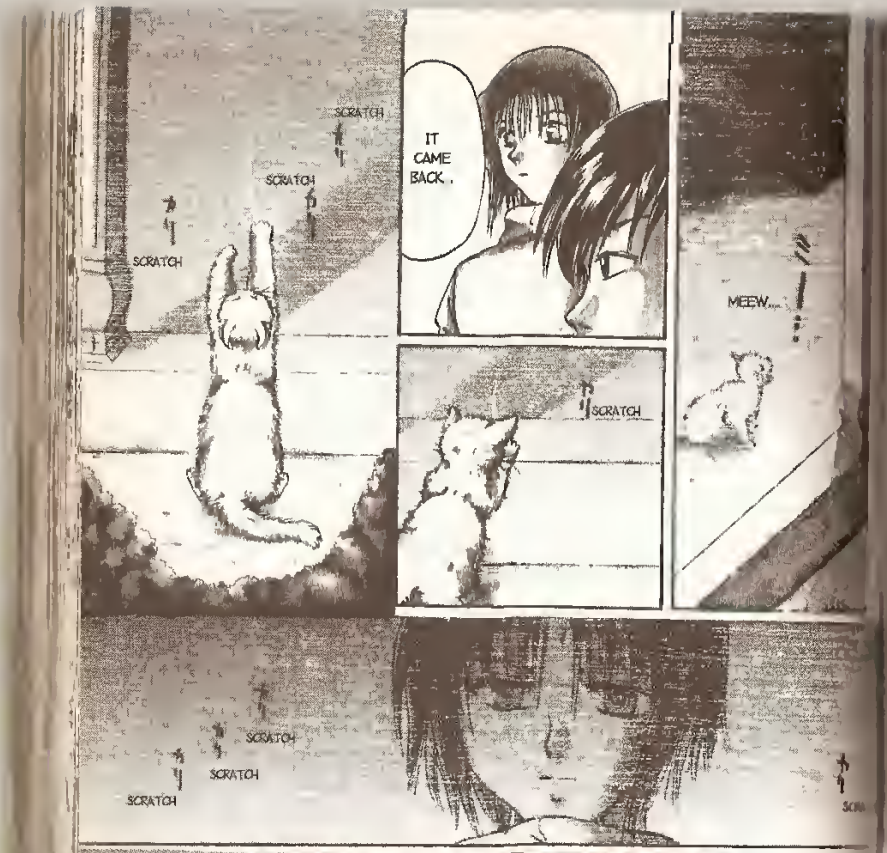
THEY SEEM TO HAVE CHICKENS TOO, OH, YES, THEY DO.
HA HA HA
..OH HERE, KITTY, KITTY.
SO, THEY HAVE CATS EVEN IN THIS COUNTRY..
OH, DEAR.. HOLD ON THERE...
...YOU CAN'T GO THAT WAY.
DASH
AND STILL A KITTEN, AT THAT.
FROM THE LOOKS OF THAT DIRTY COAT, YOU'RE A STRAY, AREN'T YOU?
THE PRINCE'S PALACE HAD NO CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD EXCEPT FOR OUR COMMUNICA-TIONS.
IT WAS A QUICK THING.
YOU SHOULDN'T COMPLAIN TOO MUCH...
..ABOUT THINGS LIKE THIS
EVEN I COULDN'T HELP BUT...
WHY IS IT THAT PEOPLE KEEP LEAVING THIS PLACE?
BUT AT THAT TIME,
OH?! HOW STRANGE!
IS IT A CAT?
...BEGIN TO GET A FEELING THAT THINGS LIKE THIS HAPPENED MUCH MORE OFTEN THAN NOT.

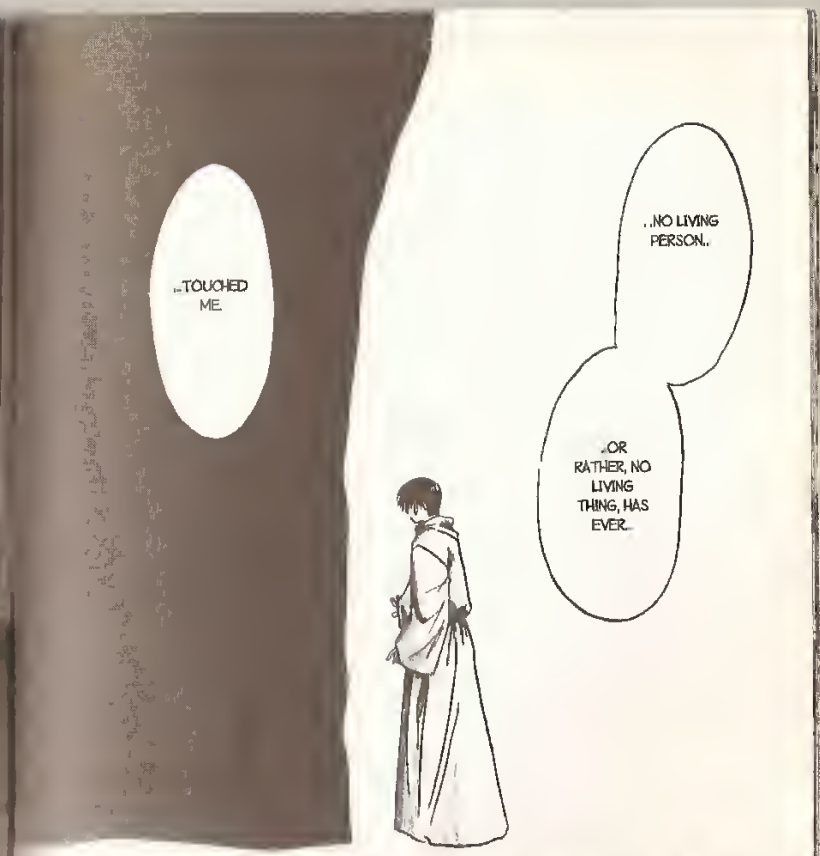

MEW
IF YOU GO NEAR PRINCE SEEU'S THIRD PALACE, YOU'LL GET YELLED AT!
AHHHH,
DARN IT.
IT RAN AWAY
HA HA HA
RUSTLE
DASH
MYAAAH!

I BELIEVE THAT WAS A STRAY...
..OR HALF A STRAY?
...I THOUGHT THAT CATS WERE THINGS THAT SAT ON A PERSON'S LAP.
WITH ALL ANIMALS, NOT JUST CATS AND DOGS..
SO WHY DID IT ESCAPE FROM YOU, TAKE?
ANIMALS THAT GROW UP WITHOUT BEING PETTED BY HUMANS WILL NEVER GET USED TO THEM.
...IN ORDER TO FEEL NORMAL AROUND HUMANS, THEY NEED TO BE RAISED AND TOUCHED FROM A VERY YOUNG AGE.
THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME I EVER SAW A REAL CAT
EVERYONE ELSE IS USUALLY TOO CAUTIOUS.
THIS VEIL WON'T EASILY BE PIERCED.
URRMM.
I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT...
I WONDER WHAT THIS VEIL IS. .
. WONDER IF I CAN ASK HIM ABOUT IT OR NOT.
I SEE.
OH, REALLY?
THIS IS A LITTLE OFF THE SUBJECT...BUT IS IT ALRIGHT THAT I'M HERE RIGHT NOW? EVERYONE ELSE COMES HERE IN SUCH A STRICT UNIFORM
BUT JUST LOOK AT ME.
...DON'T WORRY.

BUT IT IS DIFFICULT TO SAY THAT EVERYTHING BEYOND MY BODY IS HEALTHY AS WELL.
SUCH IS THE BLOOD OF ASU.
EVEN IF YOUR ROYAL BLOOD MINGLED WITH THE BLOOD OF AN OTHER-WORLDER...
..AS LONG AS A SINGLE DROP OF ROYAL BLOOD EXISTS, IT'D BE ENOUGH TO CONTINUE THE LINE.
EH? BUT THEN..DOES THAT MEAN THAT YOU..
THAT'S IMPOSSI-BLE IN MY CASE.
NYHAH.
NO, MY BODY IS HEALTHY.
は
OH!!
I MEAN .
CAN YOU NOT HAVE CHILDREN OR SOME THING LIKE THAT?
I MEAN, URHHH ..
IT IS SAID THAT IT'LL BE THE END OF THE ASU BLOODLINE.
THAT'S TRUE, THOUGH.
WHEN I BECOME THE ONLY LIVING BEING ON THIS PLANET..
I MEAN, YOU'D NEED A FINE QUEEN IN ORDER TO CONTINUE YOUR BLOODLINE.
WELL, OF COURSE THAT'S TRUE, MY PRINCE...IF YOU WERE ALONE.
WHOA, WHERE DID THAT SUDDENLY COME FROM?!
THE BLOOD OF ASU IS HARDLY THIN.

A LIVING CREATURE THAT WAS NEVER ONCE TOUCHED BY A HUMAN HAND...
..WILL NEVER ACCUSTOM ITSELF TO HUMANS.
AND FOR FOURTEEN YEARS..
MY MOTHER'S REMAINS WERE CLEARED AWAY BY THE DOLLS, IT SEEMS.
BUT PRINCE SEEU?! YOU'RE STILL SO YOUNG.
HOW COULD ANYONE COME UP WITH SUCH A DIAGNOSIS?
I CANNOT SAY THAT I GREW UP TO BE A HEALTHY HUMAN BEING.
I...
HUH?
..WHO WOULD DARE SAY SUCH A THING?
IT'S JUST LIKE YOU SAID ABOUT THE CATS.
IT HAD BEEN PREDICTED FOR A TIME NOW THAT I WOULD NOT GROW UP "RIGHT."

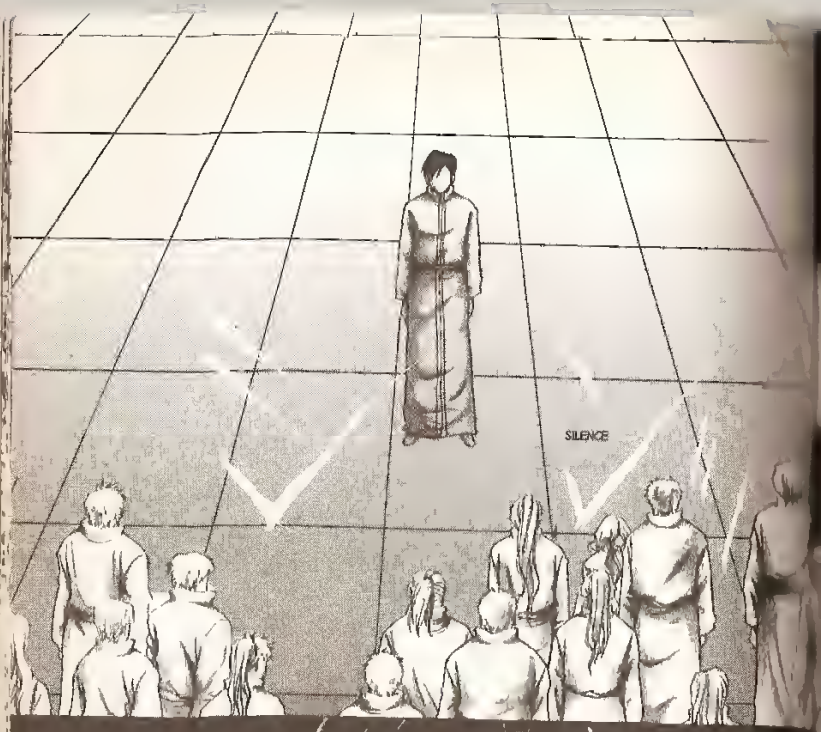

SCRATCH
SCRATCH
SCRATCH
IT CAME BACK..
MEEW...
SCRATCH
SCRATCH
SCRATCH
SCRATCH

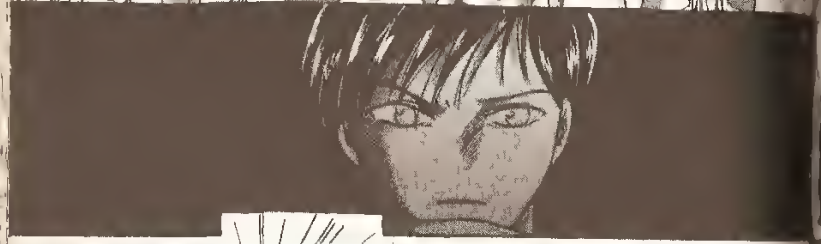

..TOUCHED ME.
..NO LIVING PERSON..
..OR RATHER, NO LIVING THING, HAS EVER..

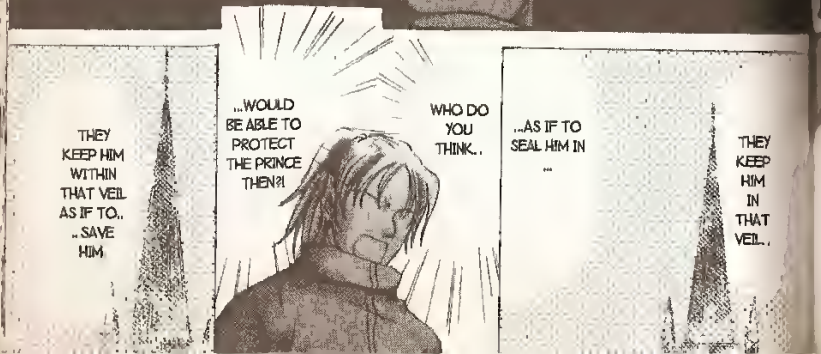
SCRATCH
SCRATCH
SCRATCH
SCRATCH
SCRATCH
SCRATCH
1

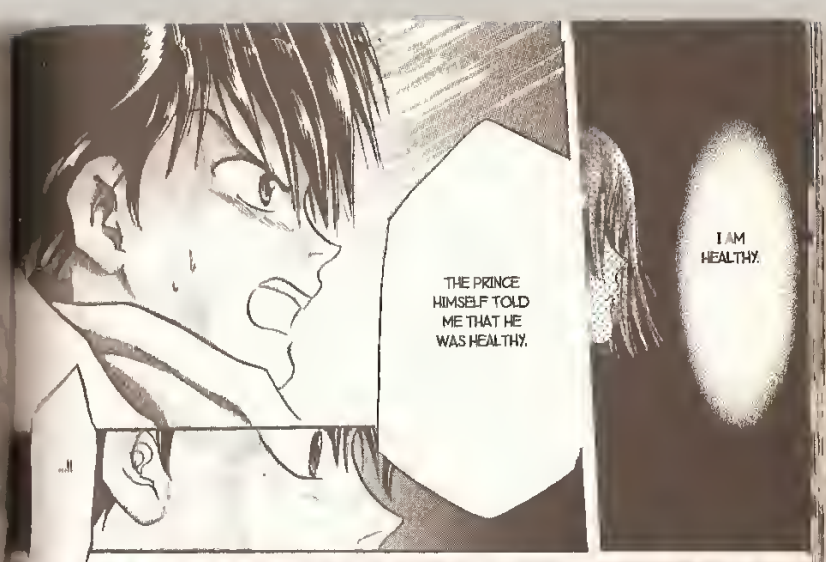
IT WON'T TEAR THROUGH THIS VEIL.
CALM DOWN, SERENANEDE!
SERENANEDE!!
AND SO THE CAT...
...ALREADY SO WRETCHED AND DIRTY...
...AAAAAAAA AAHHHHH.
KYAAAAA...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING!!?
HOW DARE YOU!! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
SERE-NANEDE...?!

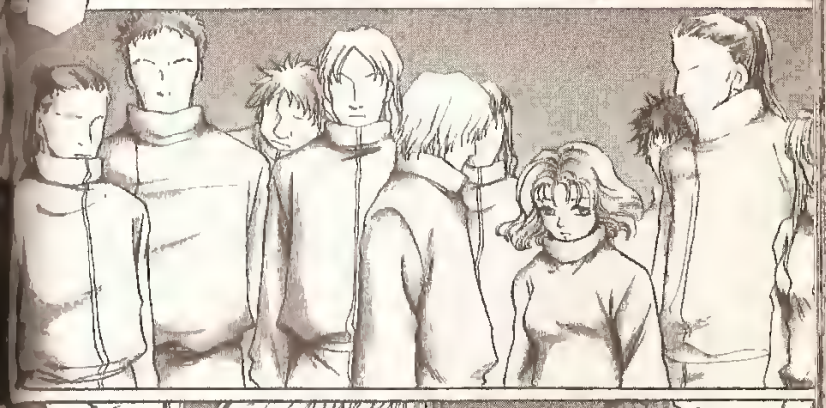
WHO THE HELL DO YOU THINK WOULD BE ABLE TO PROTECT THE PRINCE THEN?!
...WHAT IF, GOD FORBID, THE VEIL WAS TORN?
JUST WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?!
...PRINCE SEEU. PRINCE SEEU. PRINCE SEEU!
PLAYING OUT SUCH A PATHETIC SCENE IN FRONT OF PRINCE SEEU-- HOW CAN WE EVEN START TO UNDO SUCH.
STOP IT!
WHAT SORT OF GOD-AWFUL ILLNESS COULD HE POSSIBLY HAVE?!
IF HE'S SO PRECIOUS TO YOU ALL, WHY DO YOU KEEP HIM LOCKED UP IN SUCH A HORRIBLE PLACE ALL ALONE?!
PLEASE, THAT'S ENOUGH. I THINK WE ALL GOT OVERLY EXCITED ABOUT THIS.
GRAB
YOU WERE RIGHT THERE.
BUT...
WHAT IF SOMETHING UNTHINKABLE HAD HAPPENED? WHAT THEN?!
..WHAT THE HECK WERE YOU WAITING FOR!?
BUT WHAT IF...?
IT WAS JUST ONE SMALL CAT CLAWING!
AND PRINCE SEEU SAID THERE WAS NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
...BECAME AN EVEN MORE WRETCHED THING...
...AND WAS ULTIMATELY BURNED TO ASHES BY THE GUARDS.

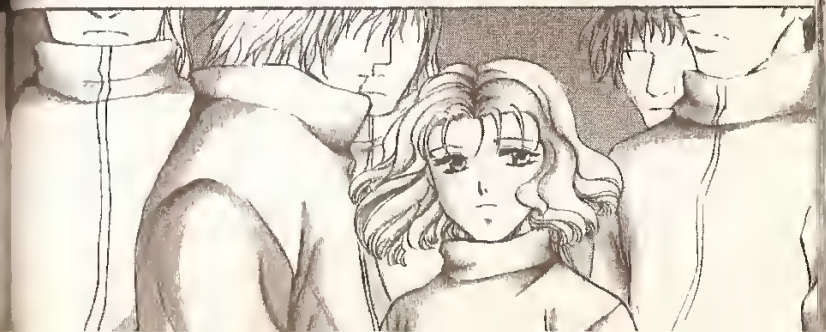

SILENCE



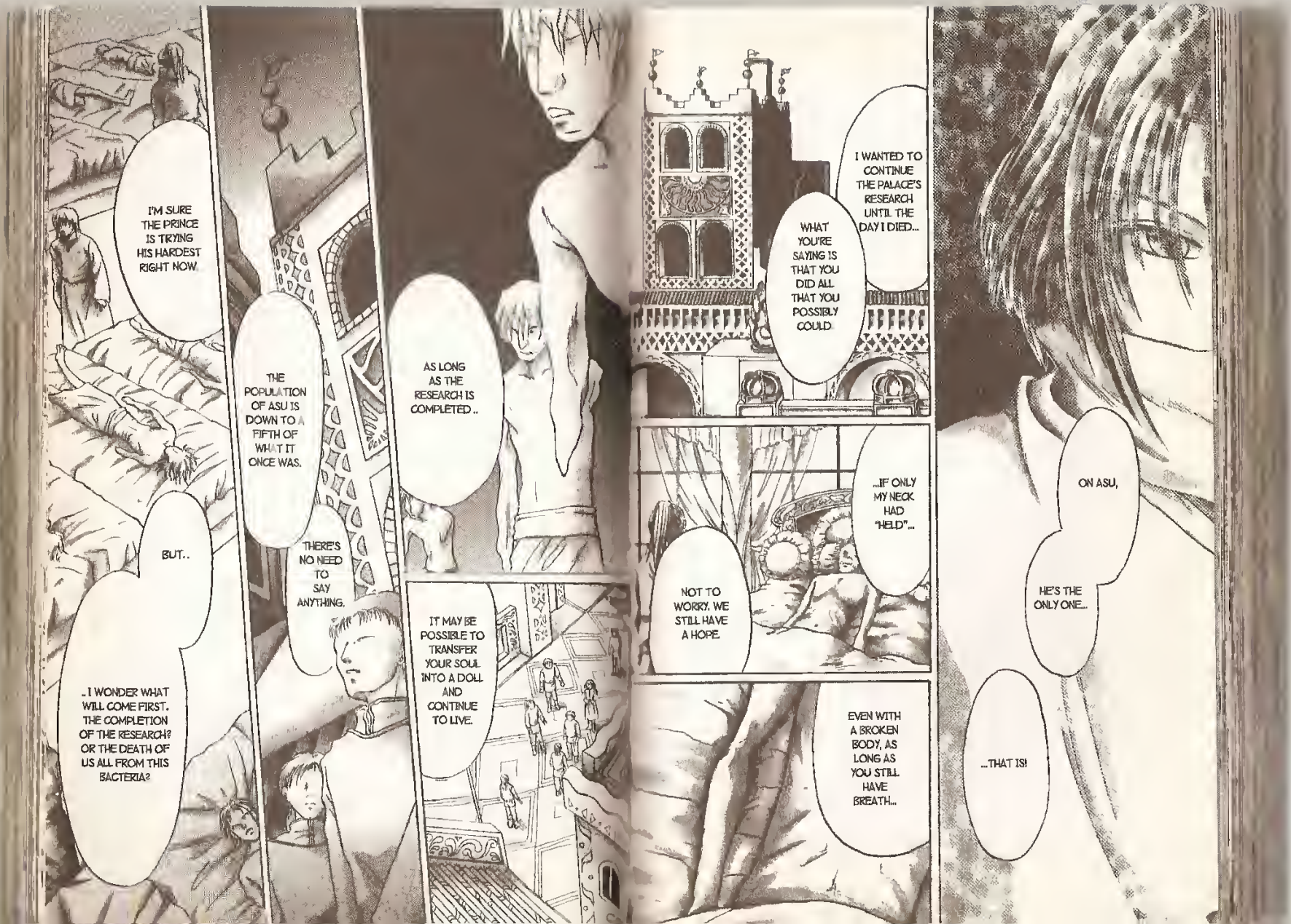

THEY KEEP HIM WITHIN THAT VEIL AS IF TO.. ..SAVE HIM
..WOULD BE ABLE TO PROTECT THE PRINCE THEN?!
WHO DO YOU THINK..
..AS IF TO SEAL HIM IN ..
THEY KEEP HIM IN THAT VEIL..


..!!
THE PRINCE HIMSELF TOLD ME THAT HE WAS HEALTHY.
I AM HEALTHY.





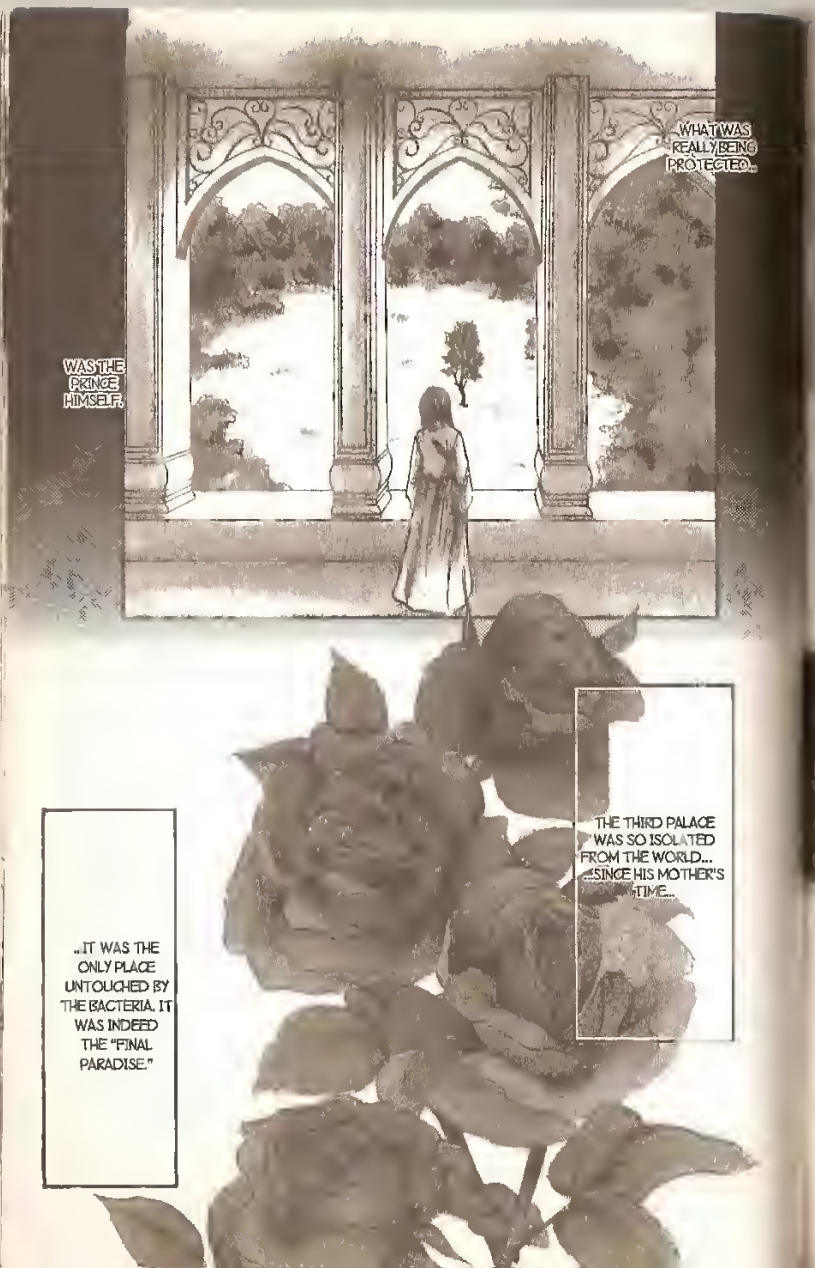
..THAT'S RIGHT...
..TAKE...
PRINCE SEEU IS..
..HEALTHY
WHY DOES IT TOTALLY THROW ITSELF INTO THE RESEARCH?
..THE ISOLATION
..TO PROTECT HIM FROM THE MILLIONS OF MICROORGANISMS IN THE AIR
WHY DOES THIS COUNTRY
NO ONE DARES TO ENTER. NO ONE DARES COME INTO CONTACT WITH HIM.
TO PROTECT HIM FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD.
BECAUSE HIS BODY IS WEAK.
BECAUSE HIS BODY IS WEAK...
..MY BODY IS HEALTHY.

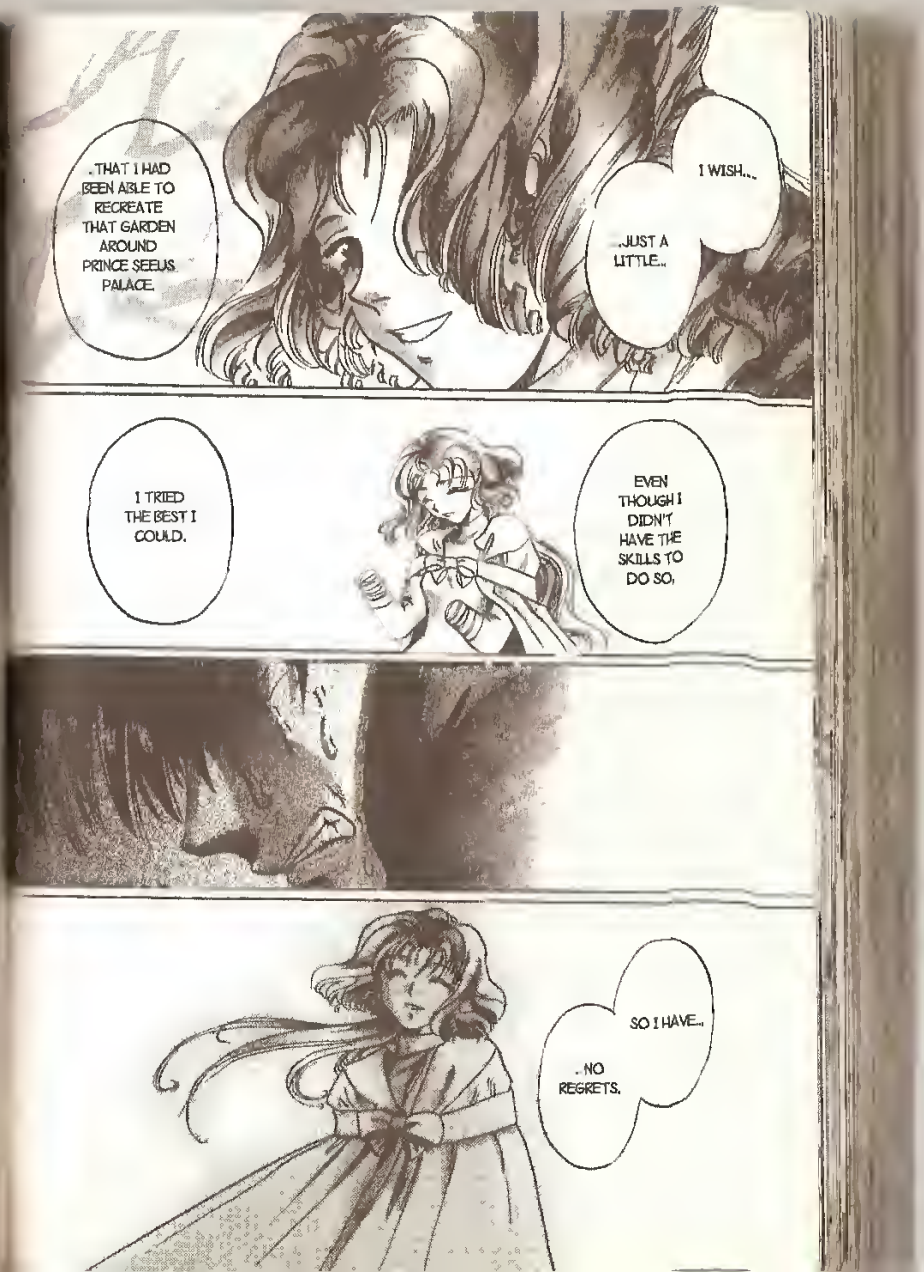

I'M SURE THE PRINCE IS TRYING HIS HARDEST RIGHT NOW.
BUT..
..I WONDER WHAT WILL COME FIRST. THE COMPLETION OF THE RESEARCH? OR THE DEATH OF US ALL FROM THIS BACTERIA?
THE POPULATION OF ASU IS DOWN TO A FIFTH OF WHAT IT ONCE WAS.
THERE'S NO NEED TO SAY ANYTHING.
AS LONG AS THE RESEARCH IS COMPLETED..
IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO TRANSFER YOUR SOUL INTO A DOLL AND CONTINUE TO LIVE.
I WANTED TO CONTINUE THE PALACE'S RESEARCH UNTIL THE DAY I DIED...
WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS THAT YOU DID ALL THAT YOU POSSIBLY COULD.
...IF ONLY MY NECK HAD "HELD"...
NOT TO WORRY. WE STILL HAVE A HOPE.
EVEN WITH A BROKEN BODY, AS LONG AS YOU STILL HAVE BREATH...
ON ASU,
HE'S THE ONLY ONE...
...THAT IS!

THE EXPLANATION IS A LONG AND DIFFICULT ONE...
...SUFFICE TO SAY, IT WAS THE RESULT OF MANY COINCIDENCES OF NATURE PILING UP ON ONE ANOTHER.
IN THIS PARALLEL UNIVERSE THAT WE LIVE IN...
...NOT EVERYTHING HAS THE SAME FATE...
SO MANY DIFFERENT PHENOMENON TAKE EFFECT, SO MANY DIFFERENT FUTURES ARE BORN.
SUCH DEVASTATING BACTERIA UNKNOWN TO EARTH WAS SOMEHOW BORN INTO THAT BEAUTIFUL, PEACEFUL SECOND WORLD

AN INVISIBLE WIND OF DEATH BLOWS OVER THIS PLANET.
...THAT'S RIGHT, JUST BY BREATHING
JUST BY BREATHING...
...ARE WE ONE STEP CLOSER TO DEATH?

THIS CROSS-SHAPED GARDEN..
...MY FATHER ONCE SUPER-VISED IT, YOU KNOW.
...IT WAS SO WONDER-FUL.
I WISH..
..I WISH YOU COULD HAVE SEEN IT WHEN MY FATHER WAS STILL ALIVE, TAKE..
...IT REALLY WAS SO BEAUTIFUL.
HUNDREDS AND HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE CARED FOR IT.
THOSE CHEERFUL PEOPLE I MET..
..JUST LIKE THOSE WHO LIVED SUCH HORROR EVERY DAY OF THEIR LIVES
THERE WAS NO WAY IN WHICH ANY VERTEBRATES, STARTING WITH HUMANS, WOULD EXIST PAST THESE 100 YEARS.
SOME SAID THIS BACTERIA WOULD NATURALLY BRING COMPLETE EXTINCTION IN LESS THAN 100 YEARS.
THOSE BACTERIA WERE MERELY SOME SORT OF SPECIAL MUTATION, AFTER ALL.
JUST AS THE HANDS AND FEET OF A DOLL MIGHT BREAK...
..THE ELBOWS OR THE KNEES WOULD JUST BEGIN TO MELT.
THE BACTERIA MAINLY AFFECTED THE JOINTS OF THE BODY..
I WONDERED.. WHEN I TOO WOULD FALL PREY TO THE SICKNESS.
WITH THEIR HANDS AND LEGS FALLING OFF, IT WAS HARDLY POSSIBLE FOR THEM TO WORK.
THE HIGH TURNOVER RATE WITHIN THE PALACE WASN'T SURPRISING.
SIMPLY WALKING MIGHT CAUSE THE HANDS, THE LEGS .
EVEN THE NECK TO SUDDENLY FALL OFF.

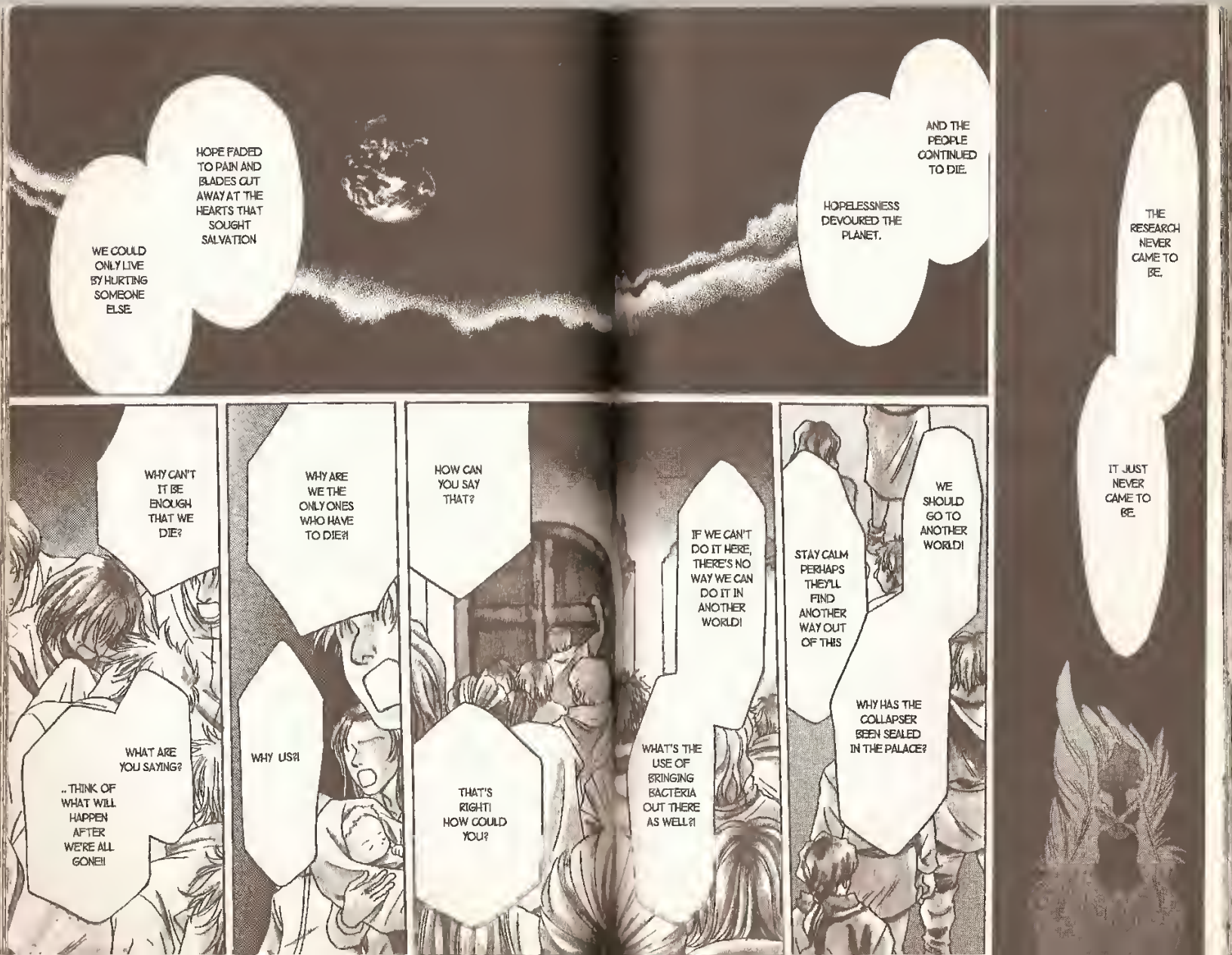

..WHAT I WAS REALLY BEING PROTECTED...
WAS THE PRINCE HIMSELF.
THE THIRD PALACE WAS SO ISOLATED FROM THE WORLD... ...SINCE HIS MOTHER'S TIME...
..IT WAS THE ONLY PLACE UNTOUCHED BY THE BACTERIA. IT WAS INDEED THE "FINAL PARADISE."


..THAT I HAD BEEN ABLE TO RECREATE THAT GARDEN AROUND PRINCE SEEUS PALACE.
I WISH... ..JUST A LITTLE...
I TRIED THE BEST I COULD.
EVEN THOUGH I DIDN'T HAVE THE SKILLS TO DO SO,
SO I HAVE.. ..NO REGRETS.

STILL, THE CHANCES OF IT GROWING UP WOULD BE QUITE SLIM.
WE'VE PERFORMED THIS EXPERIMENT WITH OTHER ANIMALS AS WELL.
THOSE CREATURES WHICH REMAINED UNTOUCHED BY ANOTHER BEGAN TO SHOW NOTICEABLE DIFFERENCES IN SIZE AND STRENGTH, TO THOSE THAT WERE TOUCHED.
THE FORMER DIDN'T PRODUCE ENOUGH GROWTH HORMONES...AND IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT THEY WERE ALSO LACKING EMOTIONALLY.
...IT WAS ALSO THE LAST BASTION OF HUMAN LIFE ON ASU.
AND EVEN THOUGH ONLY ONE PERSON LIVED THERE..
DO YOU KNOW WHAT GROWTH HORMONES ARE?
AND SO THE DOLLS BEGAN TO TOUCH PRINCE SEEU WHEN HE WAS STILL YOUNG..
..THAT IS WHY WE STILL HAVE HIM TO THIS DAY.
BUT STILL, HOW COULD THERE BE A CHILD THAT HAS NEVER TOUCHED THE SKIN OF ANOTHER HUMAN?
LET US SAY THAT IT WAS TAKEN AWAY FROM ITS PARENTS AND FRIENDS, AND WAS NEVER ONCE TOUCHED...
..LET'S SAY THAT IT WAS GIVEN MORE THAN ENOUGH WARMTH AND NOURISHMENT...
...IT WAS ALWAYS PREDICTED...
TAKE THIS BIRD HERE.
NOW HE'S GROWN VERY TALL AND STRONG, BUT...
THEY'RE ESSENTIAL TO THE GROWTH OF ANIMALS.
WHEN PRINCE SEEU WAS VERY YOUNG, HE LACKED THEM THE MOST.
PRINCE SEEU IS A KIND SOUL...
...AND HE IS A VERY INTELLIGENT BEING TOO.
DURING THE DAY, HE TRULY SHOWS SUCH A PEACEFUL, KIND FACE.
BUT..
...THERE ARE TIMES...

IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN PREDICTED.
THE MAD PRINCE...
SEEU...
...DID HE RECEIVE THAT NAME?
...WHY...
...IT MAY EVEN BLOOM THERE, EVEN TO THIS DAY.
...WAS EXCHANGED FOR AN ARTIFICIAL ONE...
SOMEHOW, THE RED ROSE THAT WAS PLANTED IN THE GARDEN...

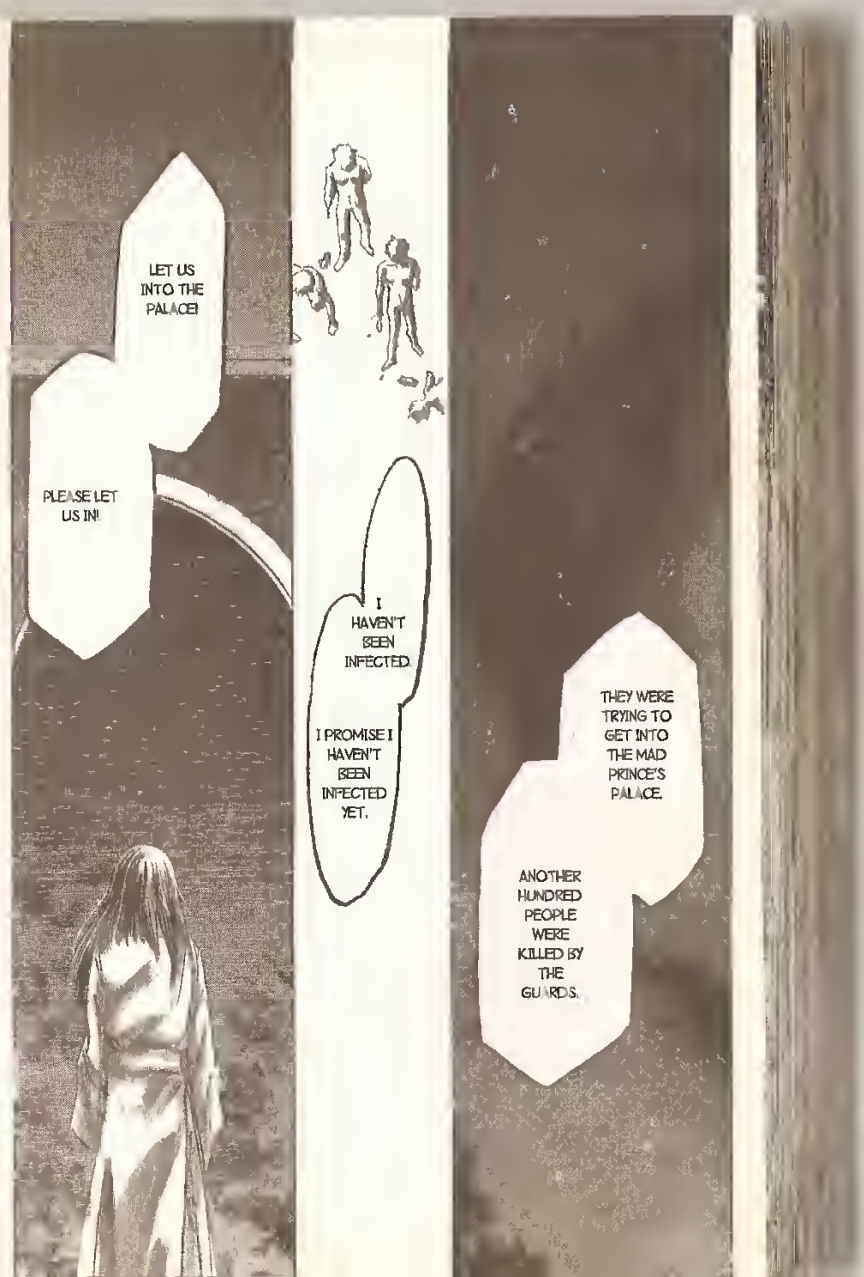
NO ONE KNOWS SHE PLANTED IT.
IT COULD HAVE BEEN HER, BUT IT COULD HAVE BEEN ANYBODY ELSE.
SHOWING THE PRINCE AN ARTIFICIAL, EVER-LASTING FLOWER DID NOT SEEM LIKE SOMETHING SHE WOULD HAVE DONE AT ALL.
I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER KNOW THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER.
AND YET, IT COULD HAVE EASILY BEEN HER.
I WISH...
...I WISH I COULD MAKE IT PERFECT.
BECAUSE THE PEOPLE OF ASU WERE BEAUTIFUL...
..AND KIND PEOPLE.
I WISH I COULD MAKE IT ALL BEAU-TIFUL...
...AND SOMEHOW MAKE SENSE OF IT ALL, AS WELL.
ALL THE THINGS THAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT...
..AND ALL THE EMOTIONS I FELT.
THAT WAS THE TRUTH.
...THEY MAY SAY THINGS THAT THEY'D NEVER NORMALLY SAY, OR DO THINGS THAT THEY NEVER THOUGHT THEY'D DO BEFORE.
WHEN ONE IS PUSHED TO THE LIMITS AND THREATENED BY DEATH..
AND YES...
IT IS PAINFUL AFTER ALL, DEAR LADY.


WE COULD ONLY LIVE BY HURTING SOMEONE ELSE.
HOPE FADED TO PAIN AND BLADES CUT AWAY AT THE HEARTS THAT SOUGHT SALVATION
HOPELESSNESS DEVOURED THE PLANET.
AND THE PEOPLE CONTINUED TO DIE.
THE RESEARCH NEVER CAME TO BE.
IT JUST NEVER CAME TO BE.
WHY CAN'T IT BE ENOUGH THAT WE DIE?
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
.. THINK OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER WE'RE ALL GONE!!
WHY ARE WE THE ONLY ONES WHO HAVE TO DIE?!
WHY US?!
HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT?
THAT'S RIGHT! HOW COULD YOU?
IF WE CAN'T DO IT HERE, THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN DO IT IN ANOTHER WORLD!
WHAT'S THE USE OF BRINGING BACTERIA OUT THERE AS WELL?!
STAY CALM PERHAPS THEY'LL FIND ANOTHER WAY OUT OF THIS
WE SHOULD GO TO ANOTHER WORLD!
WHY HAS THE COLLAPSER BEEN SEALED IN THE PALACE?

THIS CHILD MAY NOT BE INFECTED EITHER...
...PLEASE LET HIM OFF THIS PLANET!!
MY BODY IS STILL HEALTHY. I HAVEN'T BEEN INFECTED YET!!
PLEASE LET ME OUT OF HERE.
BANG
BANG
LET ME OUT!!
CREEEEAAK
I'M NOT EVEN FROM THIS PLANET!!
PLEASE LET ME GO HOME!! LET ME GO BACK TO JAPAN!!
WHY ME?
WHY ME?!
BANG
BUT THEY'LL HAVE FREE REIGN TO TAKE OVER OUR PLANET, OUR RESOURCES.
THE OTHER-WORLDERS WILL NEVER HAVE TO SUFFER.
AFTER KILLING US, THE BACTERIA WILL DISAPPEAR TOO.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO HAVE YOUR WAY!
I'M NOT GOING TO LET ANY-ONE STEAL IT!!
THEY'RE NOT GOING TO STEAL IT AWAY!
WE WON'T LET THEM STEAL IT ALL AWAY FROM US!
RRROOOOOOAAAAAAAARRRRRRRR
I'M GOING TO RUN!
GIVE US THE COLLAPSER!!
JUST WATCH! JUST WATCH ME DO IT!!
I'M GONNA GET AWAY FROM THIS FORSAKEN PLACE.
WHO SAYS THIS ISN'T SOME SORT OF INVA-SION?!
WE SHOULD SEEK REVENGE.
THERE'S NEVER BEEN ANY EVIDENCE!!

I DON'T KNOW IF MY COUNTRY HAS THE TECH-NOLOGY YET,
BUT IN MY WORLD...
I...
...I DON'T KNOW.
I DON'T KNOW. BUT THEY JUST MIGHT
ARE YOU SURE?
THEY MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP US.
...AND RUSSIA, TOO.
...AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA...
...THERE IS GERMANY AND BRITAIN...
I HEARD THAT EVEN MORE OF THEM DIED.
WE HAVE TO GET IT!
HAVE TO GET THE COLLAPSER!
FALL
YOU'RE THE THIRD-WORLDER, AREN'T YOU?
HOW ABOUT THE THIRD WORLD? DO YOU THINK THEY CAN OVERCOME THIS DIS-EASE?
WELL, ANSWER ME.
HOW IS IT OVER THERE?
AHHHHHH.
AAAAAHHHH...
AH...

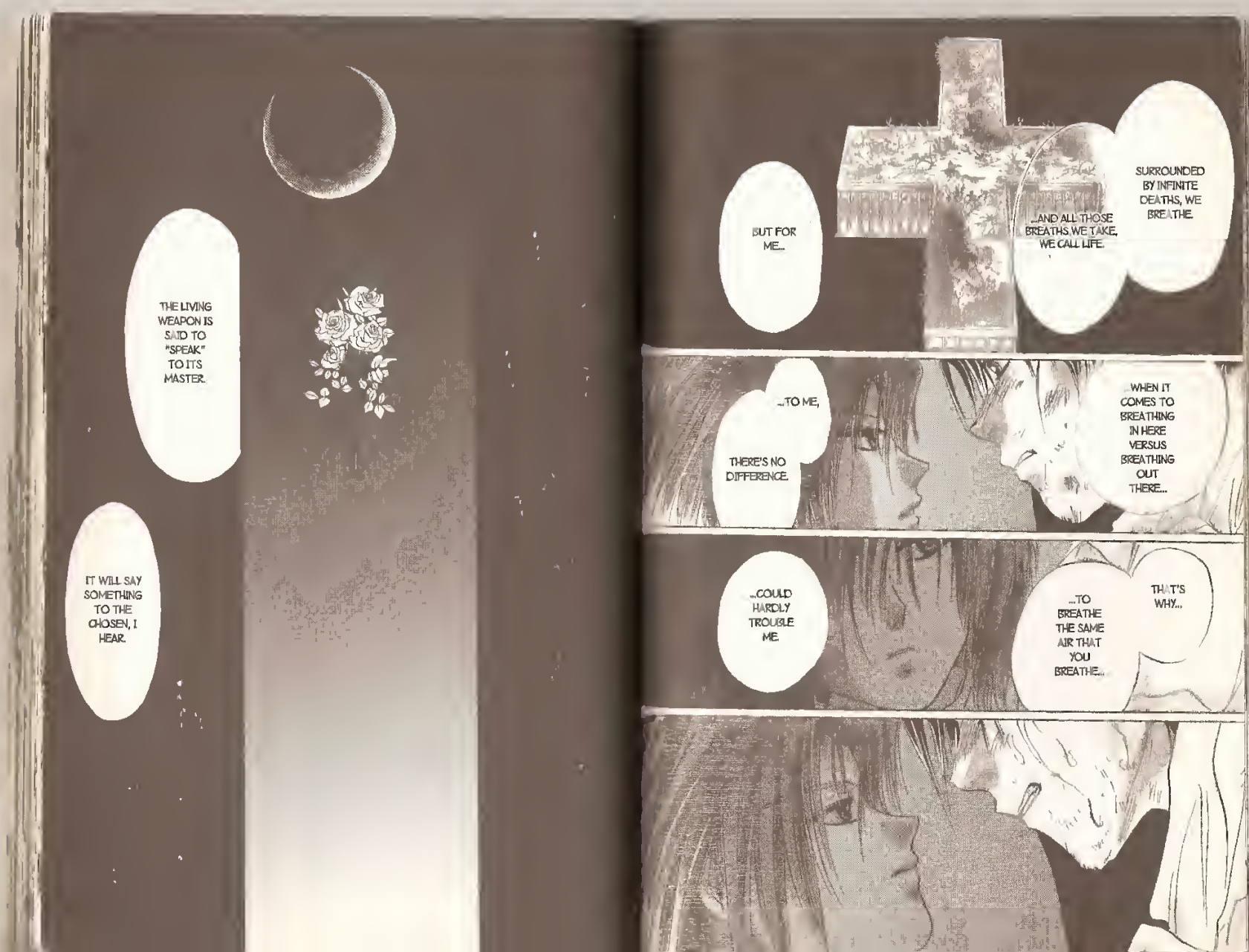
I WANT TO GET IN!
IT ISN'T FAIR THAT YOU'LL BE THE SOLE SURVIVOR.
...!
...!


LET US INTO THE PALACE!
PLEASE LET US IN!
I HAVEN'T BEEN INFECTED.
I PROMISE I HAVEN'T BEEN INFECTED YET.
THEY WERE TRYING TO GET INTO THE MAD PRINCE'S PALACE.
ANOTHER HUNDRED PEOPLE WERE KILLED BY THE GUARDS.

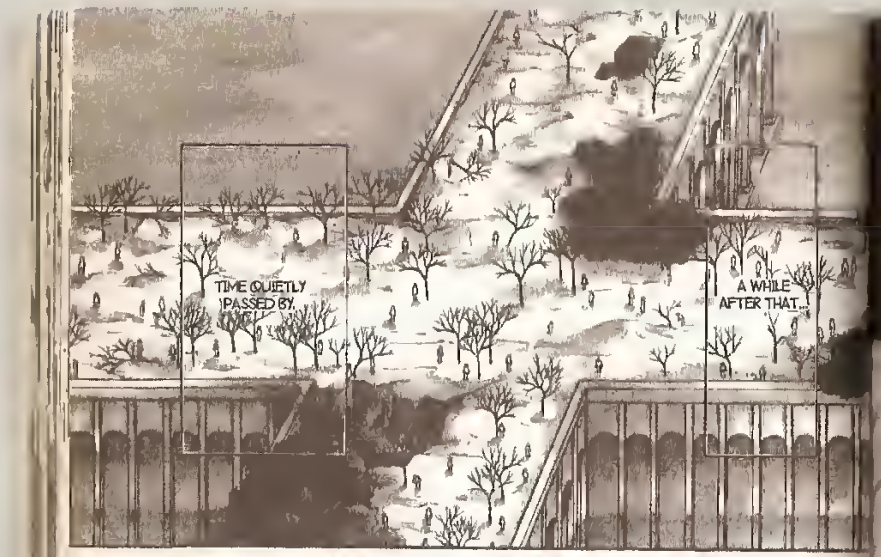
BY MERELY BREATHING THE AIR ON THIS PLANET FOR 15 MINUTES, IT'S MORE THAN 90% LIKELY THAT YOU'VE BEEN INFECTED.
THE SAME GOES FOR EVERYONE ELSE.
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
...YOU'LL NEED THE SCYTHE.
IF YOU WANT TO BREAK THROUGH WITHOUT DESTROYING EVERYTHING INSIDE...
IF YOU THINK YOU CAN TEAR THROUGH THIS VEIL WITH THOSE WEAPONS, THINK AGAIN.
DIDN'T I TELL YOU THAT THE VEIL WAS NO ORDINARY MATERIAL?

BE QUIET!!
DIE, DAMMIT!!
WHY DON'T YOU DIE FIRST?
ESPECIALLY SINCE YOU'RE THE PRINCE.
...IF THERE'S EVEN THE SLIGHTEST CHANCE...
THIS MIGHT ALL SEEM BOTHERSOME TO YOU, BUT...
EVEN I...EVEN I MIGHT BE INFECTED, SO...
YOU ARE.
IF IT'S ANY CONSOLATION, IT'S NO TROUBLE...
...BOTHERSOME...?
I...
...I WANT TO LIVE!

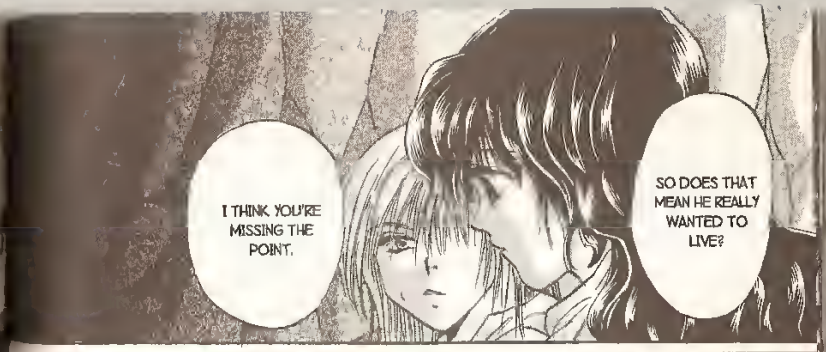
BUT AT LEAST I KNOW THAT MUCH
I'M NOT A PERFECT HUMAN BEING
I KNOW THIS BETTER THAN ANYTHING.
I AM UNABLE TO LIVE.
I AM UNABLE TO TOUCH ANYONE ELSE.
NO LIVING THING CAN TRULY LIVE WITHOUT TOUCHING SOMEONE ELSE.
YOU'RE ALIVE, TOO
EVERYONE DIES. FROM THE TIME WE ARE BORN, WE WALK THE PATH TO DEATH.
IS THAT REALLY SO HORRIBLE?
IF WE TEAR THIS VEIL OPEN, ALL THAT STANDS BEFORE YOU IS DEATH.
BUT YOU'RE ALIVE!
FIND IT!
MY FATHER IS SAID TO HAVE HIDDEN IT SOMEWHERE IN THIS PALACE.
THE LIVING WEAPON, THE LUNA TO MERCURY...
...THE TREASURE OF THE SECOND WORLD.
THE LIVING WEAPON WILL ONLY GIVE ITS STRENGTH TO THOSE WHO WANT TO LIVE.
BUT NOT EVERYONE CAN USE IT.
...IF YOU WANT TO LIVE, FIND IT. I HAVE NO RIGHT TO.
AND WHOEVER MASTERS IT WILL ALSO GAIN A BODY THAT CAN'T DIE.
ONLY ONE CAN CLAIM THIS, BUT...

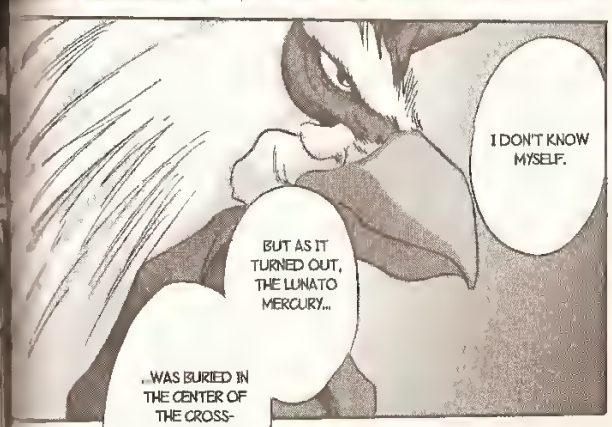

THE LIVING WEAPON IS SAID TO "SPEAK" TO ITS MASTER.
IT WILL SAY SOMETHING TO THE CHOSEN, I HEAR.
BUT FOR ME...
...AND ALL THOSE BREATHS WE TAKE, WE CALL LIFE.
SURROUNDED BY INFINITE DEATHS, WE BREATHE.
...TO ME,
THERE'S NO DIFFERENCE.
...WHEN IT COMES TO BREATHING IN HERE VERSUS BREATHING OUT THERE...
...COULD HARDLY TROUBLE ME.
...TO BREATHE THE SAME AIR THAT YOU BREATHE...
THAT'S WHY...

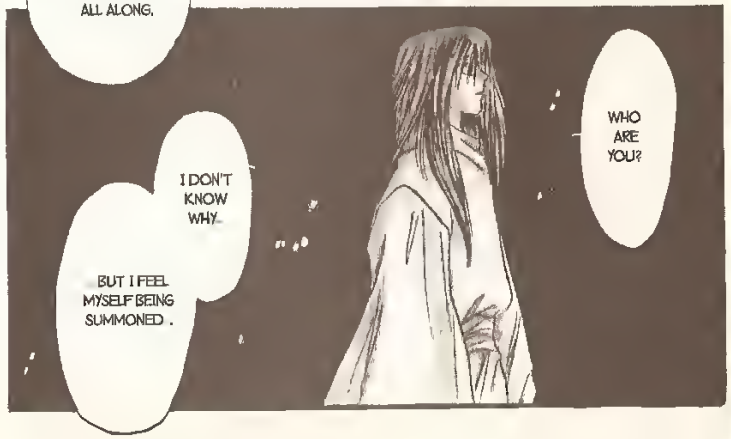
BUT NO ONE...
...NO ONE CAN HEAR IT CALL TO THEM.
SUBCONSCIOUSLY...
...THE DESTINED, TIME AND TIME AGAIN, BRING THEMSELVES TO WHERE THEIR WEAPON IS HIDDEN.
A SCYTHE..
THAT PERSON WAS CARRYING ONE, BUT...
IT'S ABSURD.
IT SIMPLY CAN'T BE.
WELL, OF COURSE HE WOULD. IT'S WELL KNOWN THAT THE MAD PRINCE IS THE MASTER OF THE LUNATO MERCURY.
WHEN THE LIVING WEAPON MEETS THE ONE IT HAS PICKED TO BE ITS MASTER,
IT WILL "CALL" TO THEM STRONGLY.
ONLY IN THE MOMENT WHEN THAT PERSON TAKES HOLD OF THE WEAPON WILL THEY ACTUALLY HEAR THE WORDS SPOKEN TO THEM...
...EVEN BEFORE BECOMING THE WEAPON'S MASTER...
...SOMETHING?
YES
...OR HAVE A STRANGE FEELING WASH OVER THEM.
JUST BY BEING NEAR THE LIVING WEAPON, EVEN WITHOUT TOUCHING IT,
THE DESTINED MAY EVEN SEE SOME SORT OF VISION..


TIME QUIETLY PASSED BY.
A WHILE AFTER THAT...

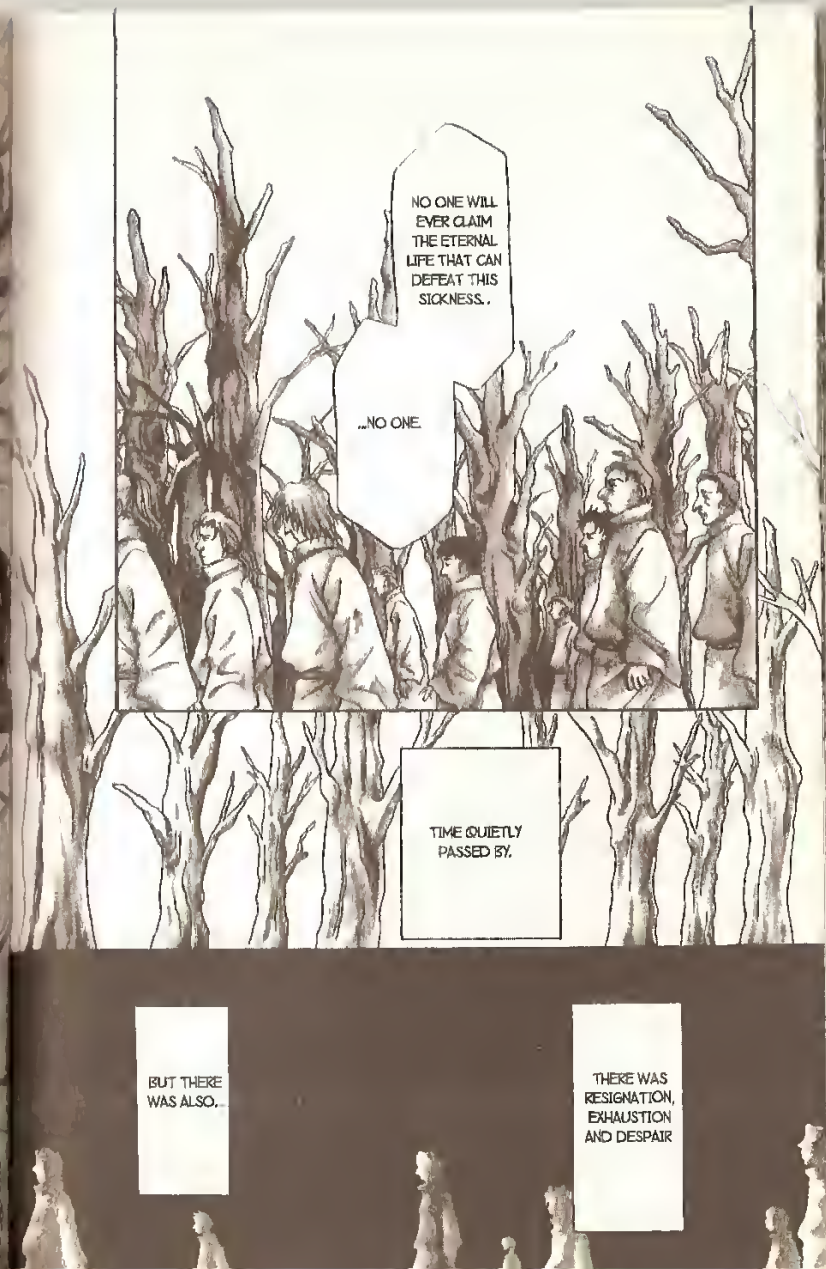
SO I GUESS...
...THAT NONE OF US WILL EVER CLAIM THE LIVING WEAPON
I CAN'T FIND IT. I CAN'T HEAR IT CALLING.

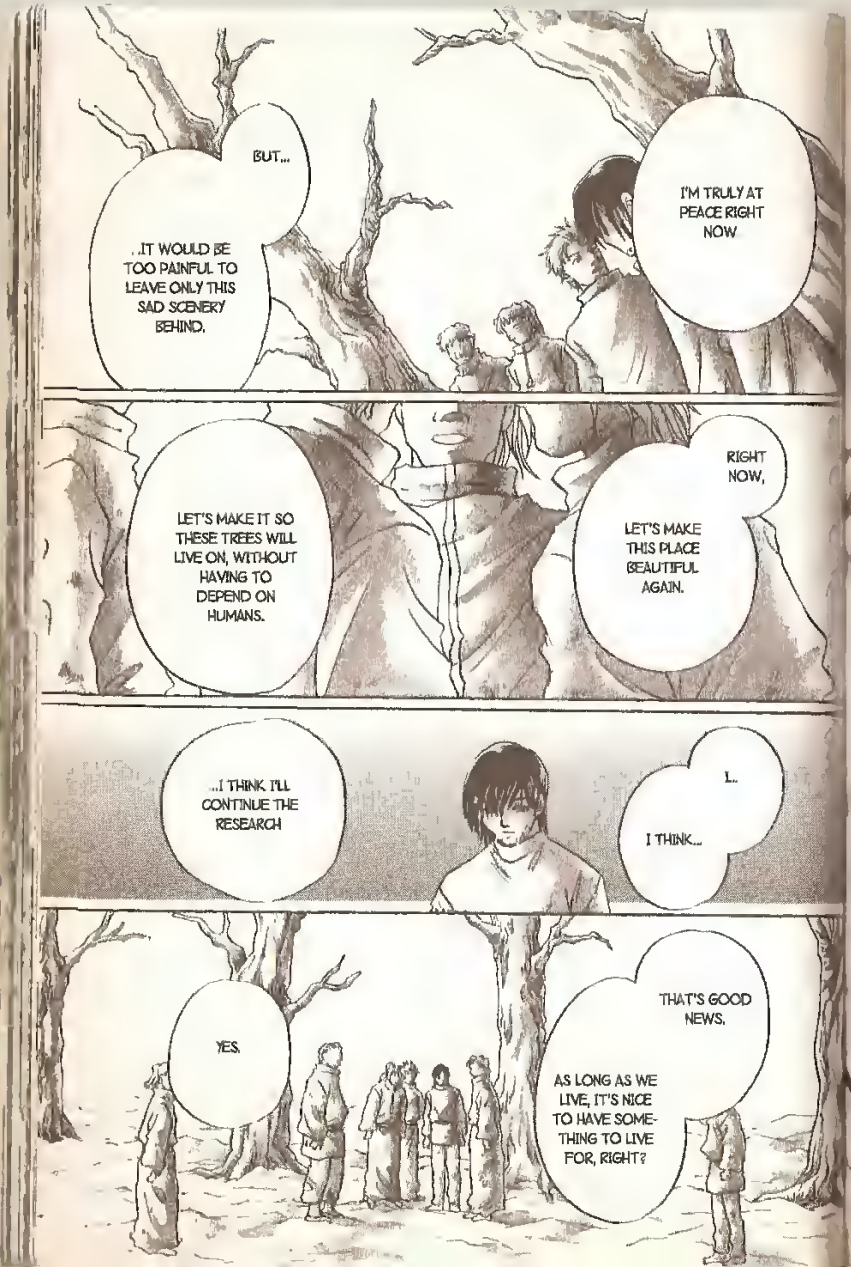

I THINK YOU'RE MISSING THE POINT.
SO DOES THAT MEAN HE REALLY WANTED TO LIVE?


I DON'T KNOW MYSELF.
BUT AS IT TURNED OUT, THE LUNATO MERCURY...
...WAS BURIED IN THE CENTER OF THE CROSS-SHAPED GARDEN ALL ALONG.


WHO ARE YOU?
I DON'T KNOW WHY.
BUT I FEEL MYSELF BEING SUMMONED .

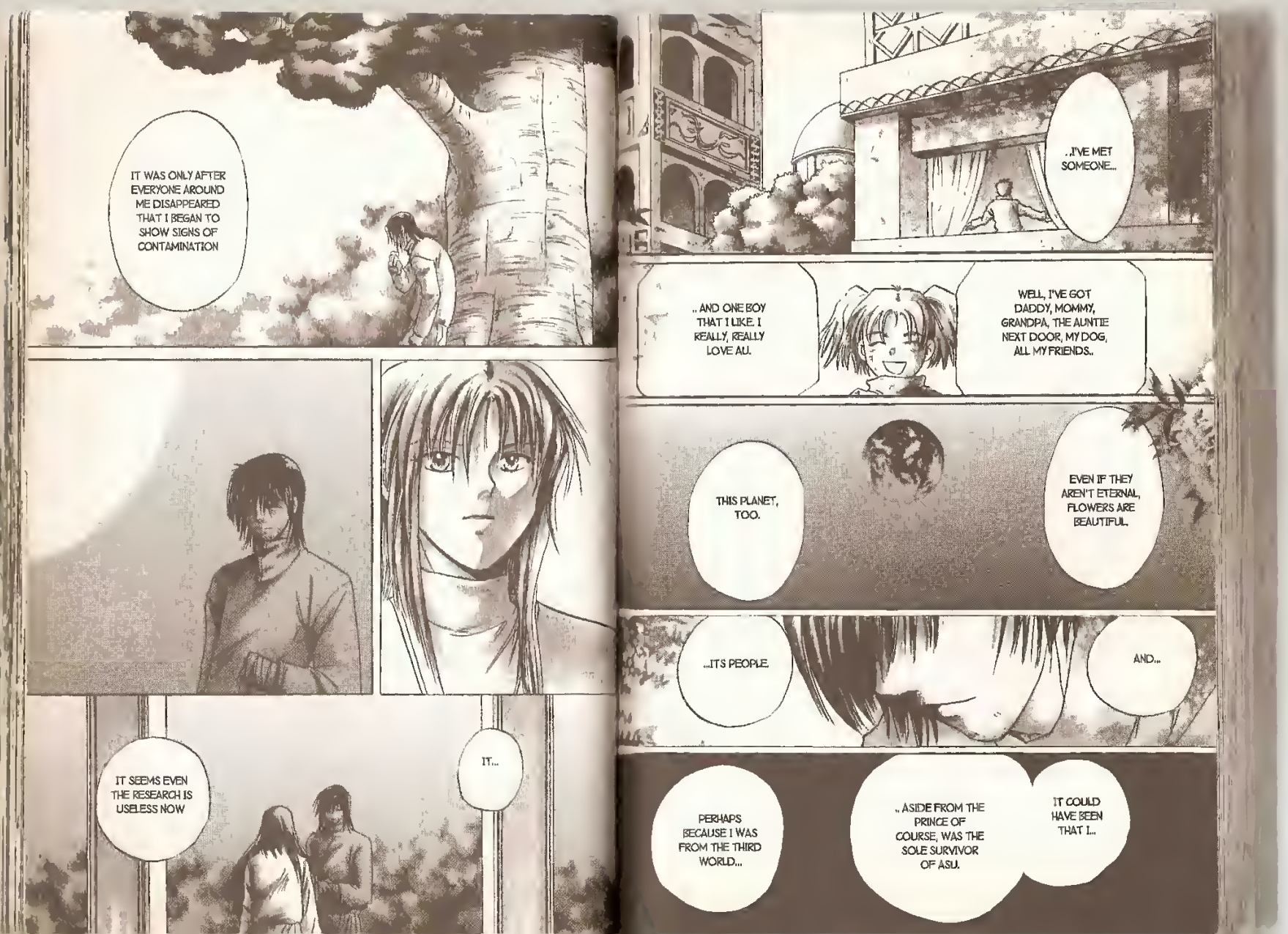
A WARMTH THAT SURPASSED EVERYTHING ELSE.
WHAT AM I DOING?
WE'RE BRACING THIS TREE UP SO IT WILL LIVE JUST A LITTLE LONGER.
FLOWERS.
WE WANT IT TO SURVIVE EVEN IF WE PERISH
THIS TREE HAS ALREADY LIVED FOR A VERY LONG TIME.
WE WANT IT TO GROW FLOWERS.


NO ONE WILL EVER CLAIM THE ETERNAL LIFE THAT CAN DEFEAT THIS SICKNESS..
..NO ONE.
TIME QUIETLY PASSED BY.
BUT THERE WAS ALSO...
THERE WAS RESIGNATION, EXHAUSTION AND DESPAIR


I'M TRULY AT PEACE RIGHT NOW
BUT...
..IT WOULD BE TOO PAINFUL TO LEAVE ONLY THIS SAD SCENERY BEHIND.
RIGHT NOW,
LET'S MAKE THIS PLACE BEAUTIFUL AGAIN.
LET'S MAKE IT SO THESE TREES WILL LIVE ON, WITHOUT HAVING TO DEPEND ON HUMANS.
I...
I THINK...
...I THINK I'LL CONTINUE THE RESEARCH
THAT'S GOOD NEWS.
AS LONG AS WE LIVE, IT'S NICE TO HAVE SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR, RIGHT?
YES.

WE JUST...
. .HAPPENED TO DIG IT UP.
WE BELIEVE THIS IS IT..
...THE LUNA TO MERCURY.
WHAT?
I HEARD IT WAS A SCYTHE.
WELL, YES...
...BUT IT DOESN'T ALWAYS HAVE TO APPEAR SO.
ITS MASTER ISN'T AMONG US,
SO NO ONE HERE CAN HEAR ITS VOICE.
SAY, TAKE..

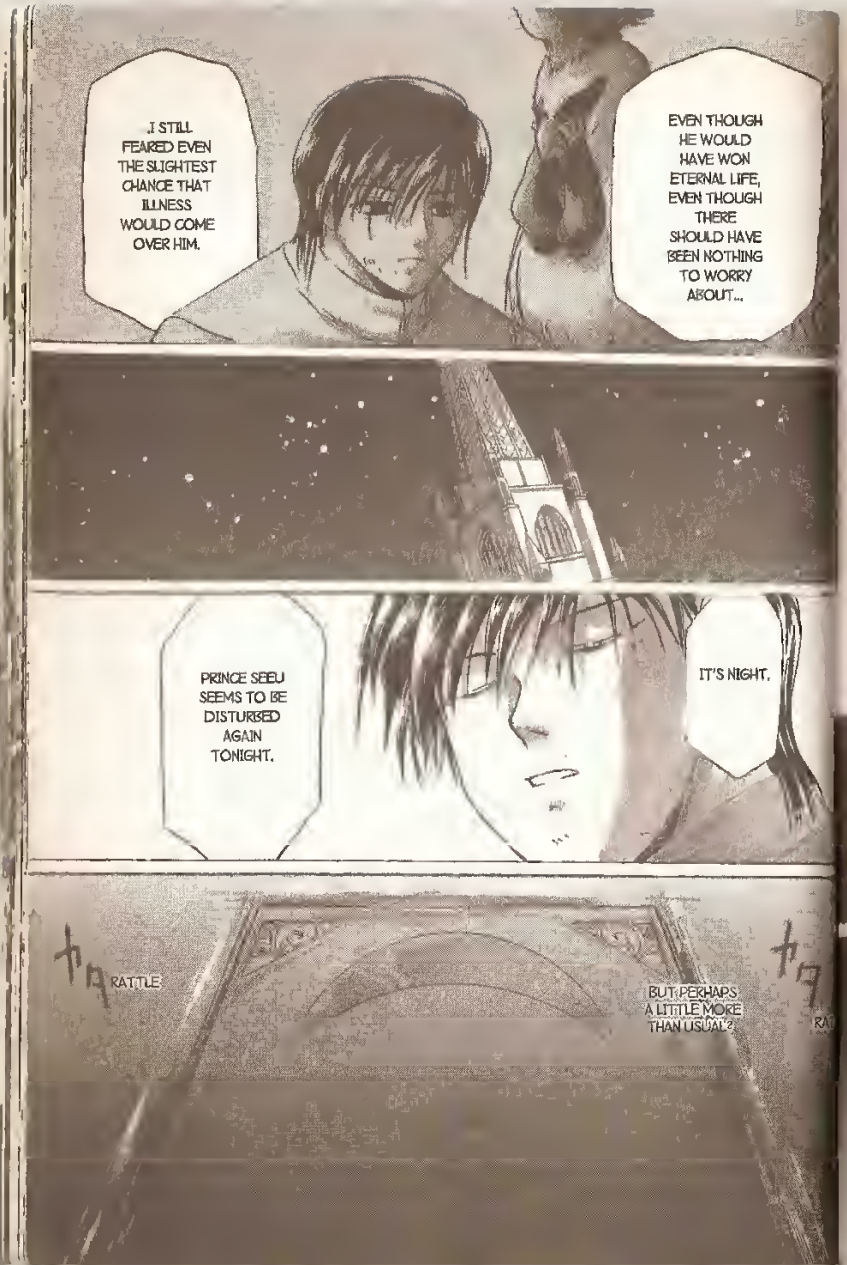
SO FROM NOW ON...
I WANT THEM TO ONLY SEE BEAUTIFUL THINGS
...I'M SO GLAD I WAS BORN
I...
THEN IT'S AN EVEN BETTER IDEA.
BUT IT'S NOT EVEN ART. IT'S JUST A SILLY SCRIBBLE.
SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD IDEA.
I THINK I WANT TO DRAW SOMETHING RIGHT HERE.
THE WORLD IS NOT FOREVER
THE STARS WILL DISAPPEAR TOO.
HEY,
SEE THAT SUN? IT MAY SHINE ON US AS IF NOTHING'S WRONG, BUT ONE DAY IT TOO WILL BURN OUT.
LIFE IS NEVER FOREVER.
NO MATTER HOW WE CHOOSE TO LIVE.
MY WIFE..
...JUST HAD MY BEAUTIFUL BABY
I'M GLAD I WAS BORN


IT WAS ONLY AFTER EVERYONE AROUND ME DISAPPEARED THAT I BEGAN TO SHOW SIGNS OF CONTAMINATION
IT SEEMS EVEN THE RESEARCH IS USELESS NOW
IT...
..I'VE MET SOMEONE...
.. AND ONE BOY THAT I LIKE. I REALLY, REALLY LOVE AU.
WELL, I'VE GOT DADDY, MOMMY, GRANDPA, THE AUNTIE NEXT DOOR, MY DOG, ALL MY FRIENDS..
THIS PLANET, TOO.
EVEN IF THEY AREN'T ETERNAL, FLOWERS ARE BEAUTIFUL.
...IT'S PEOPLE.
AND...
PERHAPS BECAUSE I WAS FROM THE THIRD WORLD...
.. ASIDE FROM THE PRINCE OF COURSE, WAS THE SOLE SURVIVOR OF ASU.
IT COULD HAVE BEEN THAT I...

IT'S HARD TO BREATHE.
THE PURIFICATION SYSTEM SEEMS TO BE SLOWLY DYING.
I DON'T THINK I'LL LIVE MUCH LONGER MYSELF.
WHAT CAN I DO?!
...AND THE DOLLS ARE IN BAD SHAPE, AS WELL.
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE THE TECHS THAT CONTROLLED IT FROM OUTSIDE DIED...
IF THERE'S ANYTHING THAT I CAN DO, PLEASE TELL ME!!
I'M STILL LIVING!!
PRINCE SEEU,
TELL ME WHAT I CAN DO!
ARE YOU LAUGHING, TAKE?
YES, I AM LAUGHING.
...AND WAIT FOR YOU TO SAVE US.
OR ELSE, WE COULD ALL GET PUT INTO A FROZEN SLEEP...
IT'S A DAMN SHAME THAT THE BACTERIA IS SO STRONG AGAINST THE COLD.

I WANT YOU TO WIN.
IF THERE'S EVEN ONE THING THAT MAKES YOU THINK, "I'M GLAD I WAS BORN"...
I DON'T CARE IF I'M BEING SELFISH...
..BUT I JUST WANT YOU TO WIN!!!
.. THEN YOU'VE ALREADY WON.
...AND SO...

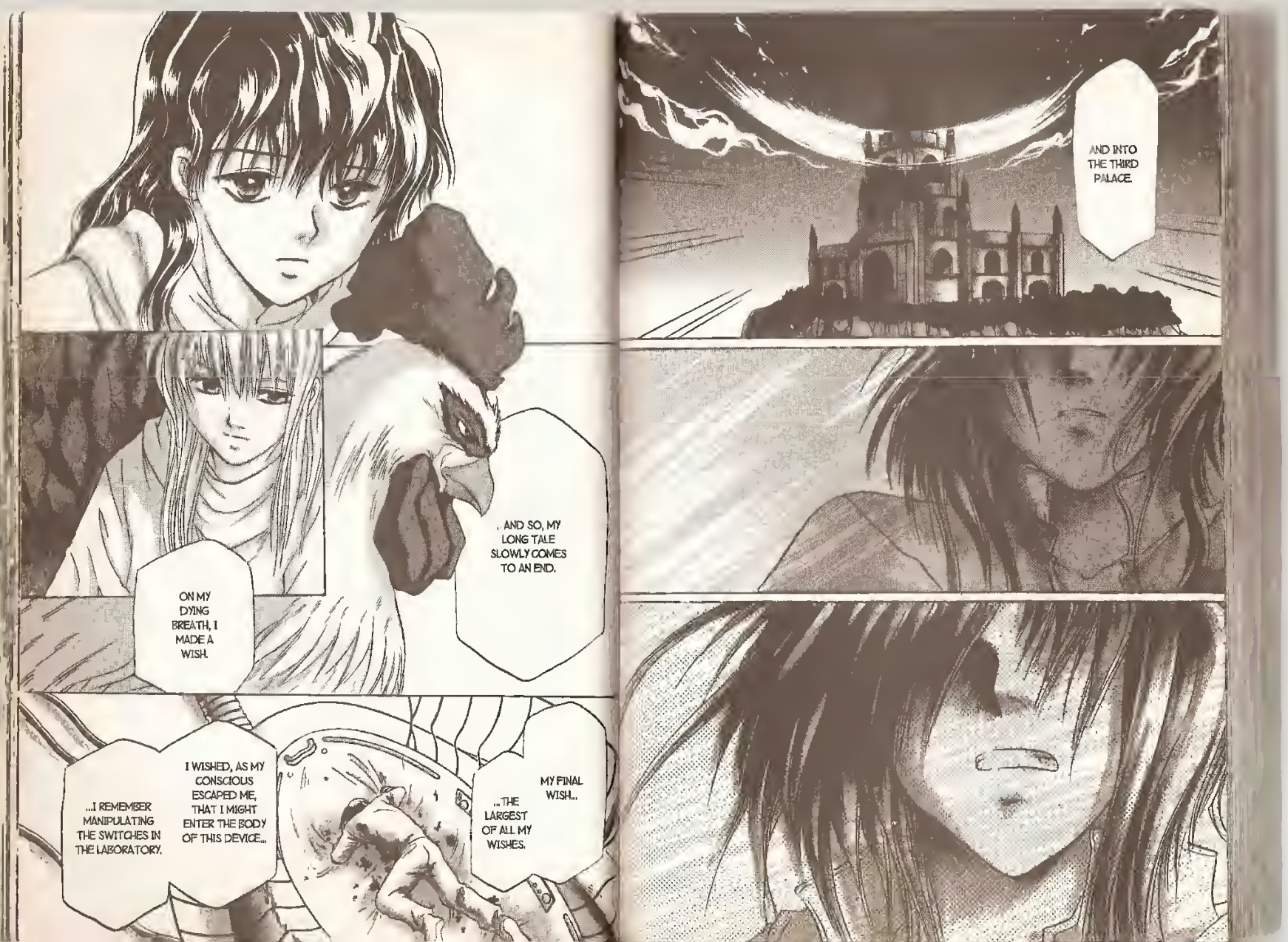
PRINCE SEEU,
TAKE!
HAVE YOU EVER..
..HAVE YOU EVER FOUND SOMETHING THAT MADE IT GREAT TO BE ALIVE?!
YOU SAID SO YOURSELF, REMEMBER?! THE ROYAL BLOOD RUNS THICK.
AND IF YOU LIVE, THEN IT MEANS THAT ASU LIVES.
YOU'RE NOT ALONE.
WELL, OF COURSE WE'LL DIE, BUT IT DOESN'T MEAN THAT WE SHOULD JUST SIT AND TAKE IT!!
YOU SAID IT, AND SO DID MANY OTHERS. WE ALL EVENTUALLY DIE.
YOU JUST CAN'T DIE THINKING LIKE THAT.


I STILL FEARED EVEN THE SLIGHTEST CHANCE THAT ILLNESS WOULD COME OVER HIM.
EVEN THOUGH HE WOULD HAVE WON ETERNAL LIFE, EVEN THOUGH THERE SHOULD HAVE BEEN NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT...
PRINCE SEEU SEEMS TO BE DISTURBED AGAIN TONIGHT.
IT'S NIGHT.
RATTLE
BUT PERHAPS A LITTLE MORE THAN USUAL?

MY FINAL NIGHT ON ASU CAME.
THAT NIGHT...
...I WAS SITTING CLOSE TO THIS CHICKEN, JUST GAZING AT THE LUNATO MERCURY...
I HAD NOT YET BROUGHT MYSELF TO SHOW IT TO PRINCE SEEU.
...THE LUNATO MERCURY..."LUNAR."
BUT I KNEW THAT IF IT WERE THE TRUTH, THEN HE WOULD EASILY TEAR THROUGH THE VEIL THAT PROTECTED THE PALACE.
I HAD BEEN SUSPECTING FOR SOME TIME THAT HE WAS LUNAR'S TRUE MASTER.

IT HAPPENED IN AN INSTANT.
LUNAR PIERCED RIGHT THROUGH ME...
..AND AT THE SAME TIME, PIERCED THROUGH THE EXPERIMENTAL UNIT AS WELL.

RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
SPLUSSSH
UU...
...LUNATO..?!


. AND SO, MY LONG TALE SLOWLY COMES TO AN END.
ON MY DYING BREATH, I MADE A WISH.
...I REMEMBER MANIPULATING THE SWITCHES IN THE LABORATORY.
I WISHED, AS MY CONSCIOUS ESCAPED ME, THAT I MIGHT ENTER THE BODY OF THIS DEVICE...
...THE LARGEST OF ALL MY WISHES.
MY FINAL WISH...
AND INTO THE THIRD PALACE.

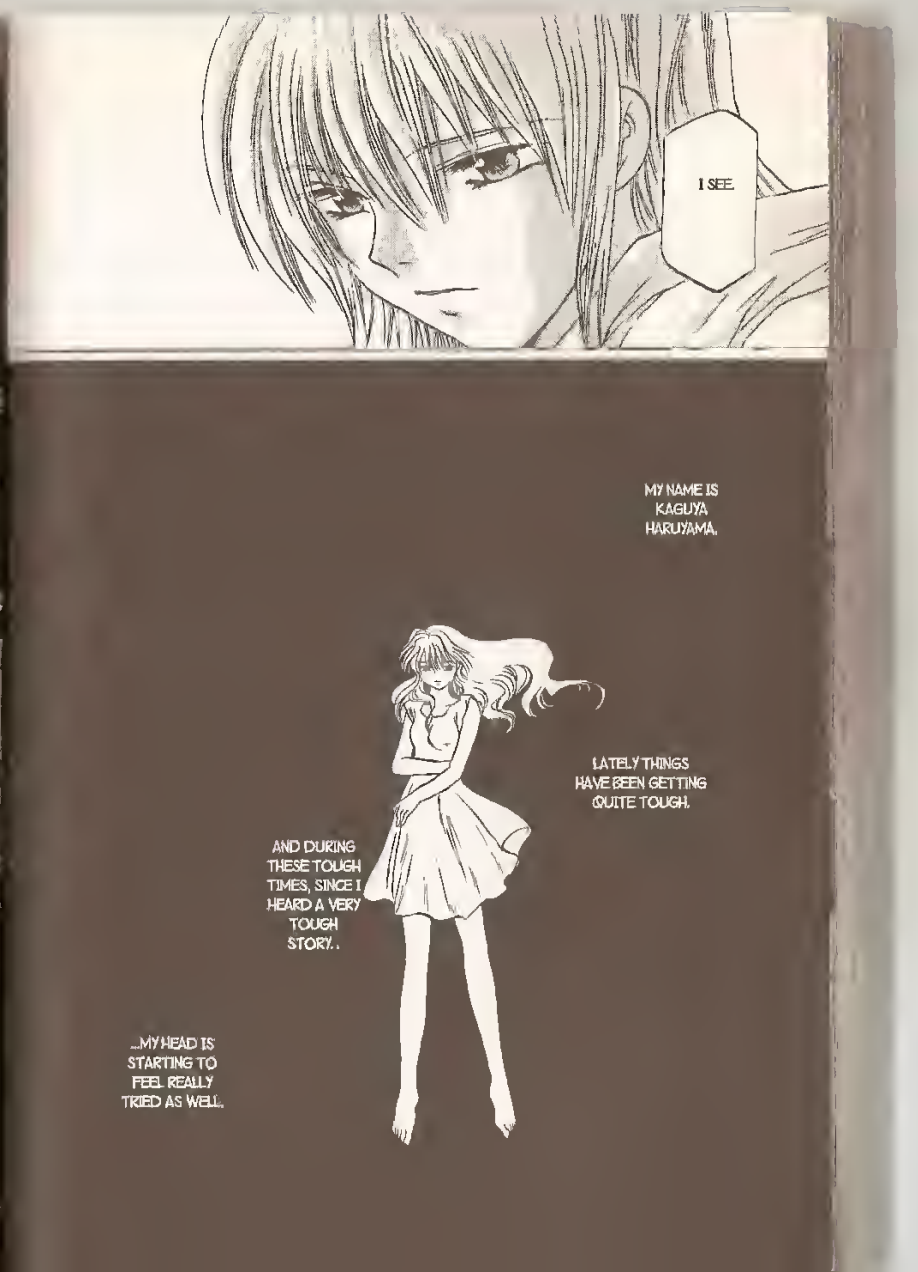
BUT WHEN I FINALLY AWOKE, I STILL COULD NOT GRASP A SINGLE MOMENT OF WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED.
IT SEEMS...
...THAT I HAD BEEN SLEEPING FOR A VERY LONG TIME.
BUT PRINCE SEEU'S PALACE WAS SO FAR AWAY.
AND SO TIME PASSED BY, AND THE BACTERIA TOO FELL TO EXTINCTION.
...I FOUND MYSELF MERELY STARING AT IT DAY AFTER DAY.
...WITH NOTHING ELSE TO DO...
WITHOUT KNOWING IT, IN THIS BODY...
...AND WAS BROUGHT HERE, TO TELENE, BY THE COLLAPSER.
EVENTUALLY, I WAS FOUND BY COUNTLESS OTHER-WORLDERS WHO CAME TO PLUNDER THE TREASURES OF ASU...
I DON'T KNOW WHY...
...OR HOW ASU ULTIMATELY BECAME THIS COLLECTION OF STAR DUST.

MR. WASEDA,
WOULD YOU LKE TO SEE HIM AGAIN?
..I SUPPOSE I DO. IT MAY EVEN BE THAT..
HMMMM..
...SEEU
SEEING THAT RED-HAIRED, BEAUTIFUL PRINCE WOULD MAKE ME..
..MORE THAN ANYONE..
..MORE THAN MY OWN PARENTS..
THE RAIN OF LUNAR..
..THEY SAY IT RAINED MANY TIMES ON THE BATTLE-FIELDS OF THE PAST.
IT DIDN'T MAT-TER IF YOU WERE FRIEND OR FOE; AFTER THE RAIN, NO ONE REMAINED STANDING.
EVEN THOSE LAWLESS BEASTS COULDN'T GET NEAR THE THIRD PALACE.
I HEARD THAT THEY WERE COVERED BY A SILVER "RAIN" THAT THREAT-ENED TO REAP THEM

I WAS ALMOST SURE THAT...
YOU MANAGED TO CONTROL YOURSELF REALLY WELL DURING THAT STORY,
BAMBI-CHAN.
...YOU'D START CRYING AT LEAST ONCE.
EH? WELL...
...IT'S NOT THAT, BUT...
...SO I...
IT'S JUST THAT...
. IT WAS SUCH A SAD STORY.
...THE MOST...
...SPEECHLESS.
CHIRP CHIRP
CHIRP CHIRP
WHAT'S THE MATTER?

I...
..I DON'T UNDERSTAND A LOT OF THE DIFFICULT PARTS.
BUT I KNOW THAT I'M SAD.
WILL THEY ALL SUFFER LIKE IN THAT STORY?
I GUESS.
THE WORLD I'M FROM...AND HERE, TOO?
I SUPPOSE.
WILL THE WORLD REALLY BE DESTROYED?
BUT IN THE END, THEY'LL HAVE THE SAME FATE.
THEY WON'T BE DESTROYED BY AN ILLNESS, THOUGH THE CONDITIONS ARE DIFFERENT.
I...
...I DON'T WANT THAT.
I WOULD HAVE FELT BAD CRYING DURING IT...
..BECAUSE IT WASN'T MINE TO CRY FOR.
ALL IT TAKES IS A STORY TO MAKE ME SAD.
OH, BAMBI-CHAN,
NO MATTER WHAT PLANET IT IS, IF IT'S WIPED OUT, IT'S JUST SO TERRIBLE TO ME.
IT'S JUST SO SAD.
THAT SOME-THING COULD BE DESTROYED ...

BUT I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO IN THIS SITUATION
NOT TO BRAG, BUT I'M A VERY SMART PERSON.
...TO SEE THEM GO THROUGH ALL THIS PAIN--I KNOW THAT I DON'T WANT THINGS TO GO ON LIKE THIS.
TO SEE SO MANY PEOPLE SADDENED OR HURT...
YOU APPEARED IN ONE OF MY DREAMS BEFORE.
HEY...
..DO YOU KNOW THAT I CAN'T DO ANYTHING ON MY OWN?
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT YOU WERE ALL ALONE FOR SO LONG.


I SEE.
MY NAME IS KAGUYA HARUYAMA.
LATELY THINGS HAVE BEEN GETTING QUITE TOUGH.
AND DURING THESE TOUGH TIMES, SINCE I HEARD A VERY TOUGH STORY..
...MY HEAD IS STARTING TO FEEL REALLY TIRED AS WELL.

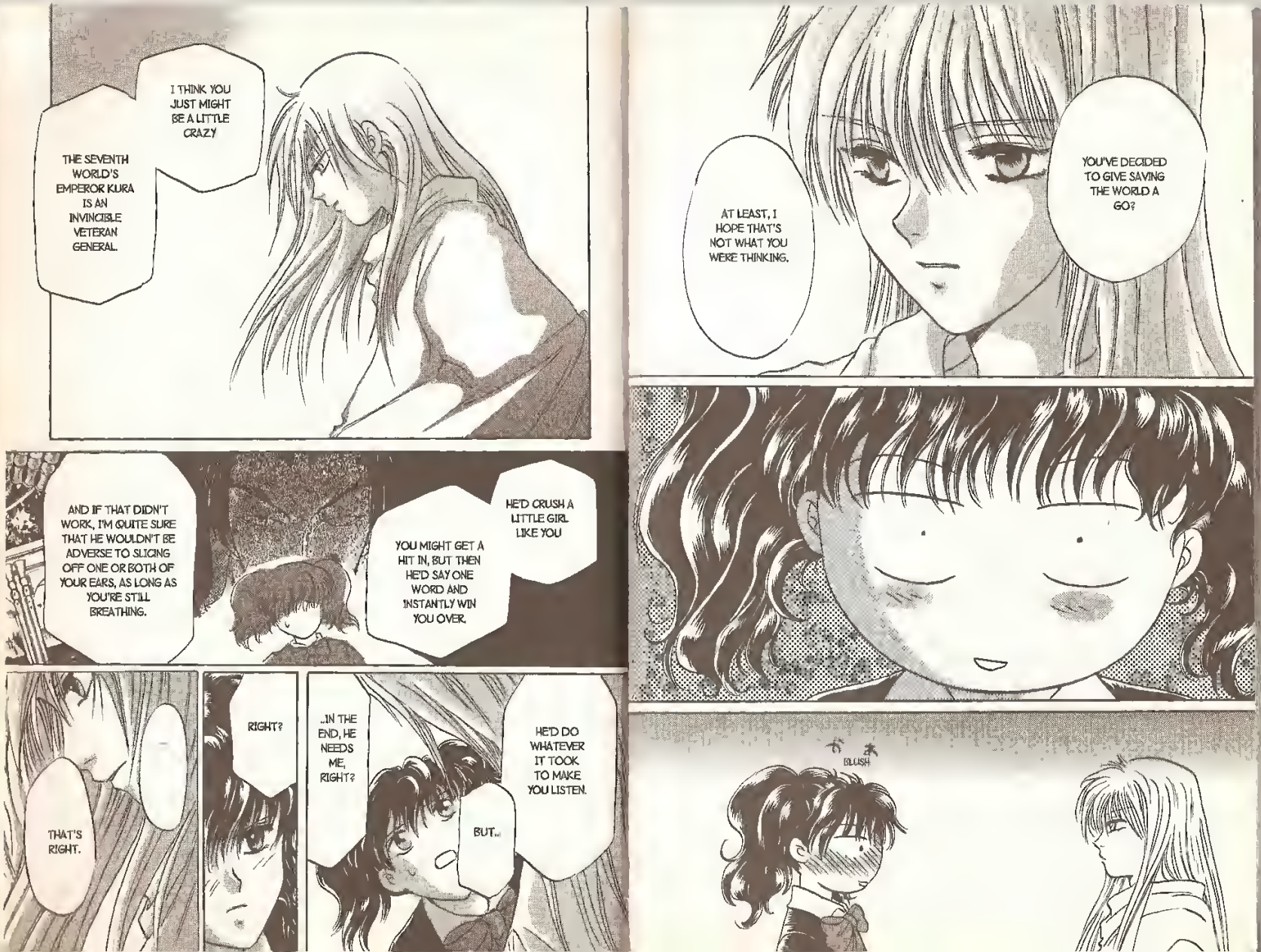
KAGAMI.....?
...?!
CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP
CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP
...MAYBE I'M JUST AN ESPECIALLY USELESS CASE.
OR NOT...
...I THINK THAT FEW PEOPLE CAN DO THINGS ALL ON THEIR OWN.
BUT...
HELP ME!
GRAB
...KYAH!!

IF YOU WISH, WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO CAUSE A LITTLE SCENE FOR YOU?
HMM.
...SO IT SEEMS THAT YOU YOUNG LADIES ALSO HAVE PROBLEMS OF YOUR OWN.
NO NEED. WE'VE ALREADY GOT A VIOLENT ONE ON STAFF.
..
WILL YOU TURN THE OTHER WAY FOR ONE MOMENT?
BRUSH
KAGAMI..MR. WASEDA..
A LOT OF THEM?
DO YOU FEEL THE PRESENCE OF SOMEONE?
THEY'RE CLOSE BY..

BUT...
I'M NOT KID-DING.
KAGAMI!!
I DON'T WANT HIM TO DO THAT..
..SO I'M GOING TO GET NEAR THEM FIRST.
AND PLEASE LISTEN TO ME. IF YOU ARE VIOLENT TO ANYONE..
PLEASE REMEMBER THIS...
..I'LL KILL MYSELF.
..EVEN IF IT'S TO PROTECT ME...

I...
...I'M GONNA GET CAUGHT.
I'M GONNA SEE WHAT HAPPENS THEN.
...BAMBI-CHAN
HEE HEE HEE
OH, MY. HOW ADORABLE!
I'M SURE YOUR KNIGHT COULD CRUSH ALL OF THEM WITH HIS PINKY.
THERE ARE ONLY A DOZEN OF THEM.

WELL, IT'S NOT THAT IT'S REALLY CONFIDENCE.
..URRR...
WHAT'S WITH ALL THIS CONFIDENCE ALL OF A SUDDEN?
IT'S JUST THAT.
I...
IT'S JUST...
I KNOW IT'S A SIMPLE CONCEPT, BUT...
I MEAN,
IT'S JUST THAT I FINISHED HEARING MR WASEDA'S STORY.
. SINCE I CAME HERE, I HAVEN'T UNDERSTOOD ANYTHING.
YOU KNOW WHAT?
I...
..SHE TOLD ME SO MUCH ABOUT THIS WORLD, RIGHT?
...SO I STARTED THINKING AS WELL...
EVEN NOW, THERE ARE JUST TOO MANY THINGS I DON'T UNDERSTAND..
...BUT AS WE TRAVELED, BAMBI-CHAN...
..IF I KEEP RUNNING, IT'S NOT GONNA GET ANY EASIER.
WHETHER IT'S USING THE COLLAPSER OR FINDING SEEU..
...MIGHT WORK OUT BETTER.
SO MAYBE JUMPING IN THERE AND TAKING MY OWN CHANCES..


I THINK YOU JUST MIGHT BE A LITTLE CRAZY
THE SEVENTH WORLD'S EMPEROR KURA IS AN INVINCIBLE VETERAN GENERAL.
AND IF THAT DIDN'T WORK, I'M QUITE SURE THAT HE WOULDN'T BE ADVERSE TO SLICING OFF ONE OR BOTH OF YOUR EARS, AS LONG AS YOU'RE STILL BREATHING.
YOU MIGHT GET A HIT IN, BUT THEN HE'D SAY ONE WORD AND INSTANTLY WIN YOU OVER.
HE'D CRUSH A LITTLE GIRL LIKE YOU
THAT'S RIGHT.
RIGHT?
..IN THE END, HE NEEDS ME, RIGHT?
BUT...
HE'D DO WHATEVER IT TOOK TO MAKE YOU LISTEN.
AT LEAST, I HOPE THAT'S NOT WHAT YOU WERE THINKING.
YOU'VE DECIDED TO GIVE SAVING THE WORLD A GO?
BLUSH

Planet Ladder 4
Coming in December

Orphaned in a war she can't remember, Kaguya is happy with her adopted family on this mysterious planet she now calls home. But chaos returns when a mysterious boy tells her of her past as a princess from another world. With her trusty guardian, Gold, by her side, Kaguya sets out on a journey from world to world to claim her birthright. Courted by some, hunted by others, Kaguya's destiny is feared by all, for it is her fate to decide which worlds will rule, and which shall die.

DO YOU THINK YOU CAN REALLY THREATEN THE WORLD WITH JUST THAT?
DO YOU STILL FEEL LIKE TAKING HIM ON?
THAT'S YOUR ONLY WEAPON, YOU KNOW
YEAH, I DO.
AT LEAST...
..I'M GONNA TRY.
• TO BE CONTINUED IN VOLUME 4 •